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# THE JESUS PROBLEM

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edition.

A SHORT HISTORY OF FREETHOUGHT. 2 vols.  
Third edition.

RATIONALISM.

THE DYNAMICS OF RELIGION. (Out of print.)

STUDIES IN RELIGIOUS FALLACY. (Out of print.)

LETTERS ON REASONING. Second edition.

# THE JESUS PROBLEM

## A RESTATEMENT OF THE MYTH THEORY

BY

J. M. ROBERTSON, M.P.

[ISSUED FOR THE RATIONALIST PRESS ASSOCIATION, LIMITED]

LONDON:

WATTS & CO.,

17 JOHNSON'S COURT, FLEET STREET, E.C. 4

1917

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## PREFATORY NOTE

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MOST of the propositions in mythology and anthropology in this book are founded on bodies of evidence given in the larger works of the author. It seemed fitting, therefore, to refer to those works instead of repeating hundreds of references there given. Readers concerned to investigate the issues are thus invited and enabled to do so. For brevity's sake, *Christianity and Mythology* is cited as *C.M.*; *Pagan Christs* as *P.C.*; and the *Short Histories* of Christianity and Freethought as *S.H.C.* and *S.H.F.* respectively. In the first three cases the references are to the second editions; in the last case, to the third. *The Evolution of States* is cited as *E.S.* Another work often referred to is Sir J. G. Frazer's great thesaurus, *The Golden Bough*, which is cited as *G.B.*, the references being to the last edition. Other new references are given in the usual way. The *Ecce Deus* of Professor W. B. Smith is cited in the English edition.

Passages in brackets, in unleaded type, may be passed at a first perusal by readers concerned mainly to follow the constructive theory. Such passages deal controversially with counter-polemic.





# THE JESUS PROBLEM

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## CHAPTER I

### THE APPROACH

As was explained in the preamble to *THE HISTORICAL JESUS* (1916), that work was offered as prolegomena to a concise restatement of the theory that the Gospel Jesus is a mythical construction. That theory had been discursively expounded by the writer in two large volumes, *CHRISTIANITY AND MYTHOLOGY* and *PAGAN CHRISTS*, and summarily in *A SHORT HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY*, the argument in the two former combining a negative criticism of the New Testament narrative with an exposition of the myth-evidence. Criticism having in large part taken the form of a denial that the records were unhistorical, it was necessary to clear the ground by showing that all the various attempts of the past generation to find in the gospels a historical residuum have entirely failed to meet critical tests. Those attempts, conflicting as they do with each other, and collapsing as they do in themselves, give undesigned support to the conclusion that the gospel story is without historic basis.

It remains to restate with equal brevity the myth-theory which, long ago propounded on a very narrow basis, has latterly been re-developed in the light of modern mythology and anthropology, and has in recent years

found rapidly increasing acceptance. Inevitably the different lines of approach have involved varieties of speculation; Professors Drews and W. B. Smith have ably and independently developed the theory in various ways; and a conspectus and restatement has become necessary for the sake of the theory itself no less than for the sake of those readers who call for a condensed statement.

This in turn is in itself tentative. If the progressive analysis of the subject matter from the point of view of its historicity has meant a century and a half of debate and an immense special literature, it is not to be supposed that the theory which negates the fundamental assumptions of that literature can be fully developed and established in one lifetime, at the hands of a few writers. The problem "What really happened?" is in fact a far wider one for the advocate of the myth-theory than for the critic who undertakes to extract a biography from the documents. In its first form, as propounded by Dupuis and Volney, the myth-theory was confined simply to certain parallelisms between Christian and Pagan myth, and to the astronomical basis of a number of these. From this standpoint the actual historic inception of the cult was little considered. Strauss, again, developed with great power and precision the view that most of the detail in the gospel narrative is myth construction on the lines of Jewish prophecy and dogma. But Strauss never fully accepted the myth-theory, having always assumed the existence of a teacher as a nucleus for the whole. As apart from the continuators of Dupuis and Volney, it was Bruno Bauer who, setting out with the purpose of extracting a biography from the gospels, and finding no standing ground, first propounded a myth-theory from that point of view.

His construction, being the substantially arbitrary one of a hypothetical evangelist who created a myth and thereby founded the cultus, naturally made no headway; and its artificiality strengthened the hands of those who claimed to work inductively on the documents. It was by reason of a similar failure to find a historic footing where he had at first taken it for granted that the present writer was gradually led, on lines of comparative hierology and comparative mythology and anthropology, to the conception of the evolution of the Jesus-cult from the roots of a "pre-Christian" one. The fact that this view has been independently reached by such a student as Professor W. B. Smith, who approached the problem from within rather than by way of the comparative method, seems in itself a very important confirmation.

What is now to be done is to revise the general theory in the light of further study as well as of the highly important expositions of it by Professor Smith and other scholars. An attempt is now definitely made not merely to combine concisely the evidence for a pre-Christian Jesus-cult, but to show how that historically grew into "Christianity," thus substituting a defensible historical view for a mythic narrative of beginnings. And this, of course, is a heavy undertaking.

The question, "What do you put in its place?" is often addressed to the destructive critic of a belief, not with any philosophic perception of the fact that complete removal is effected only by putting a tested or tenable judgment in place of an untested or untenable one, but with a sense of injury, as if a false belief were a personal possession, for the removal of which there must be "compensation." In point of fact, the destructive process is rarely attempted without a coincident process of substitution. Even to say that a particular text is

spurious is to say that some one forged or inserted it where it is, for a purpose. That concept is "something in its place." Some Comtists, again, are wont to commit the contradiction of affirming that "no belief is really destroyed without replacement," and, in the next breath, of condemning rationalists who "destroy without replacing." Both propositions cannot stand.

If it be meant merely to insist that explanation is replacement, and that explanation is a necessary part of a successful or complete process of destruction, the answer is that it is hardly possible even to attempt to cancel a belief without putting a different belief in its place; and that it is nearly always by way of positing a new belief that an old one is assailed. The old charge against rationalism, of "destroying without building up," is historically quite false. Almost invariably, the innovator has offered a new doctrine or conception in place of the old. True, it might not be ostensibly an equivalent, for the believer who wanted an equivalent in kind. An exploded God-idea is not for me replaceable by another God-idea: the only rational "replacement" is a substitution of a reasoned for an authoritarian cosmology and ethic. But in the way of reasoned replacements the innovators have been only too quick, in general, to formulate new conceptions, new creeds. They have really been too eager to build afresh, and many untenable formulas and hypotheses are the consequences.

These very attempts, naturally, are constantly made the objects of still more hasty counter-attack. Every form of the myth-theory with which I am acquainted, whatever its defects, has been the result of much labour, and even if astray can be fairly pronounced "hasty" only in the sense that it proves to be inadequate. It is not so with most of the counter-criticism. The reader

may rest assured that it is not possible for any exposition of the new theory to be as "hasty" as is usually its rejection.<sup>1</sup> Professional theologians who cast that epithet are in general recognizably men who believed their hereditary creed before they were able to think, and have at no later stage made good the first inevitable omission.

Myth-theories, sound or unsound, are the attempts of students who find the record incredible as history to think out, in the light of the documents and of comparative mythology and hierology, the process by which it came to be produced; and even as all myth is but a form of traditionary error, so any attempt to trace its growth runs the risk of error. It is one thing to show, for instance, that the Pentateuch cannot have been written by "Moses," seen to be a non-historical figure: it is another thing to settle how the books were really made. In such cases, the "something in the place" of the tradition is to be ascertained only after long and patient investigation and counter-criticism. So with the investigation of the fabulous history of early Rome. After several scholars had set forth grounded doubts, the problem was ably and systematically handled by the French freethinker Louis de Beaufort in 1738. Early in the nineteenth century, Niebuhr, confidently undertaking "with the help of God" to get at the truth, and falsely disparaging Beaufort's work as wholly "sceptical," effected a reconstruction which has since been found to be in large measure unsound, though long acquiesced in by English students.<sup>2</sup> In such matters there is really no finality. If well-documented history must in every

<sup>1</sup> The charge of haste is posited as a preliminary to criticism by the Rev. Dr. Thorburn in his work on *The Mythical Interpretation of the Gospels*. Some examples of Dr. Thorburn's own haste will be found in the following pages.

<sup>2</sup> Twenty years ago a French scholar gently included me in this reproach.

age be rewritten, no less inevitable is the re-writing of that which is reached only by processes of inference. And the gospel problem is the hardest of all. Still more than in the case of the Pentateuch problem, many revisions will probably be needed before a generally satisfactory solution is reached.

There is nothing for it but to trace and retrace, consider and reconsider, the inferrible historic process. Met as he is by alternate charges of reckless iconoclasm and "hasty" construction, the proper course for the holder of the myth-theory is to repeat with dispassionate vigilance both of his processes—to show first that the progressive effort to extract from the gospels a tenable biography has ended in complete critical collapse, revealing only a tissue of myth; and then to attempt to indicate how the pseudo-history came to be compiled: in other words, how the myth arose. Such has been my procedure in the preceding volume and in this.

It may of course be argued that the previous negative criticism of the gospel record is indecisive; that the avowal of Loisy: "If the trial and condemnation of Jesus, as pretended Messiah, could be put in doubt, we should have no ground for affirming the existence of the Christ," does not commit other inquirers, or that the historicity of the trial story has not really been exploded; that the nullity of the alleged Evangel has not been established; or that the complete destruction of previous biographical theories claimed by Schweitzer for himself and Wrede has not been accomplished. The answer is that these issues are not re-opened in the following chapters. They were carefully handled in the previous volume, to which I have seen no attempt at a comprehensive and reasoned answer.



[The latest attack I have seen comes from a former antagonist, who appears to lay his main complaint against the book on the ground that it "omits to notice *the* theory of the synoptic problem which appears in every modern text-book," that is, "the two-documents hypothesis." And there emerges this indictment:—

As the theory has a vital bearing on the relative values of different strata of tradition, Mr. Robertson cannot afford to ignore it. If we apply to himself the crude principle he applies to Paul and the evangelists, to wit, that if they don't mention a thing they don't know it, we must assume that Mr. Robertson is still ignorant of the very elements of the problem he is professing to solve. Since he has no clear or tenable view of the documents and their relations to one another, he obviously cannot answer the historical questions they raise.<sup>1</sup> . . . Presumably he omits to mention it because he does not see its significance.<sup>2</sup>

Before coming to the main matter, it is necessary to elucidate the charge as to a "crude principle" applied to Paul and the evangelists. The "principle" really applied was this, that if "Paul" in all his writings, apart from two interpolated passages, shows no real knowledge whatever of the gospels, and no knowledge whatever either of the life or the teachings of Jesus as there recorded, we are compelled to infer either that these details were not in any form known to Paul, or that, if he knew them, he did not believe them. It is not a matter of his not knowing "*a* thing": that is the sophism of the critic; it is a matter of his not knowing *anything* on the subject. And so with the synoptics and the fourth gospel. When one side relates something vital to the record, of which the other side shows no knowledge whatever<sup>3</sup>—as, for instance, great miracles—we are bound to infer that the silent side, when it is the earlier record, either did not know or did not believe

<sup>1</sup> I omit personalities.

<sup>2</sup> Art. by H. G. Wood in *The Cambridge Magazine*, Jan. 1917.

<sup>3</sup> Cp. *H.J.* 128–139.

the story. Or, again, when John alleges that the disciples baptized freely and the synoptics make no mention of it, it is clear that we cannot suppose them, in the alleged circumstances, to have been ignorant of such a fact; while, if they are supposed to have known it and yet to have kept silence, their credit as historians is gravely shaken. The "principle," in fact, is that of critical common-sense; and the critic's version of it is a forensic perversion.

On the next issue, it is perhaps well to explain to the lay reader that the "two-documents hypothesis" is simply what Schmiedel—with a very justifiable implication—named "the *so-called* theory of two sources," a mere aspect of "the borrowing hypothesis" which constitutes the main substance of the bulk of the documentary discussion of the gospels in the last century, and which is simply the most obvious way of attempting to explain the documentary phenomena. It dates from Papias. As the critic asseverates, it is *the* theory of the text-books in general. And for the *main* purposes of historic comprehension, it is neither here nor there. The theory of two sources cannot possibly cover all the data, even from the biographical point of view. The effect of Schmiedel's article—a model of critical honesty and general good sense which his successors might usefully strive to copy in those regards—is to show that the hypothesis is quite inadequate even as a *documentary* theory; and from the point of view of the rational student it is simply neutral to the vital question, What really did happen, in the main? He who has realized that the Entry, the Betrayal, the Last Supper, the Agony, the Trials, and the Crucifixion, are all as mythical as the Resurrection, is not *at that point* concerned with the dispute as to priority among the gospels, or any sections of them. No documentary hypothesis can possibly make the myth true.

At the vital point, in fact, the two-documents hypothesis is not even ostensibly applicable: the synoptic narrative is *one* primary narrative, subjected to minor modifications. It is admitted by Harnack to have been absent from "Q," the *Logoi* "source" held to have been drawn upon



by Matthew and Luke. And that one narrative, as I have argued, is not in origin a "gospel" narrative at all, but the simple transcript of a mystery-drama, with almost the minimum of necessary narrative insertion. If the exegete could bring himself to contemplate rationally *my* hypothesis, he might find his documentary labours lightened.<sup>1</sup>

It is doubtless true that the determination of the earlier as against the later form of a minor narrative episode, or of a teaching, is often essential to the framing of a true notion as to its mode of entrance; and such determination I have attempted many times. But the notion that historicity is a matter of priority of documents is, as Schmiedel sees, the fallacy of fallacies. Prisoned in that presupposition, exegetes defending the record achieve inevitably the very failure they impute: they are "ignorant of the very elements of the problem they are professing to solve"—that is, the problem of what really happened. They cannot realize the conditions under which the gospels were compiled. They construct what they think a "clear or tenable" view of the documents by the process of evading the considerations which make it *untenable* or inadequate, and then demand that their documentary formula shall be met by one *in pari materia*. The answer to them is that their psychological as well as their historical assumptions are false. Things did not happen in that way. And two versions of a palpable myth do not make for its historicity. There are two or more versions of most myths.

The indictment before us, in short, is an illustration of the mode of theological fence discussed above. You undertake to show that the most alert presentments of a given historical conception fail to stand critical tests, and you are met with the reply: "We are not concerned to discuss the presentments you deal with, which are not generally accepted: we demand that you discuss

<sup>1</sup> In the course of a second attack, the critic avows that he knows of "no theory of gospel-origins, *living or dead*," which concedes that the tragedy-story was added to the gospels as a separate block. Reminded that the school of B. Weiss make their "Primitive Gospel" end before the tragedy, he replies in a third attack that that school is "obsolete"—i. e. neither living nor dead?

instead the documentary theory which in those presentments is treated as obsolete. If you do not do this, you show you are incompetent." When on the other hand the critical significance of an older theory is indicated, the reply is made that that theory is "obsolete." One theory is too new, another is too old, for discussion. All the while, the theory founded-on for the defence is really the oldest of all. It was in fact the obvious inadequacy of the familiar documentary hypothesis that dictated our discussion of more up-to-date theories, as it had elicited these. If our exegete's favourite hypothesis had had any power of satisfying independent students, we should not have had such treatises as those of the Rev. Dr. Wright and Dr. Flinders Petrie, or the searching analysis and commentary of M. Loisy, to say nothing of the vigorous Dr. Blass.

In dealing with such writers, and particularly in following the "real" procedure of M. Loisy on the main issues of historical fact, I took what seemed to me the candid controversial course. To resort instead to a mere exposure of the obvious insufficiency of the "two-documents hypothesis" would be like arguing as if Genesis were the only alternative to the Darwinian theory. Dr. Wright's "oral hypothesis" is a vivid and interesting revival of what, as I pointed out, had long ago been the "predominant" view.<sup>1</sup> Our exegete nevertheless affirms that I regard it "as something new in England." To the lay reader I would again explain the situation thus handled. Theological discussion on the gospels has moved in cycles, by reason of the invariable presupposition as to historicity, which was a main factor in the partial failure of the mythical theory as introduced by Strauss. As I expressly stated, the oral hypothesis was before Strauss "well established." Then ensued the age-long discussion of documentary hypotheses. At the close of the nineteenth century we find Schmiedel saying:

Lastly, scholars are also *beginning to remember* that the evangelists did not need to draw their material from books alone, but that from youth up they were acquainted

<sup>1</sup> It seems to have been the view of Mr. Cassels.

with it from oral narration and could easily commit it to writing precisely in this form in either case—whether they had it before them in no written form, or whether they had it in different written form. In this matter, again, we are beginning to be on our guard against the error of supposing that in the synoptical problem we have to reckon merely with given quantities, or with such as can be easily ascertained.<sup>1</sup>

If I had written that, I should doubtless be told that I regarded the oral hypothesis as “new.” Dr. Schmiedel, it is to be hoped, may escape the aspersive method of my critic. In point of fact, a return to the oral hypothesis was inevitable in view of the insufficiency of the other. Unfortunately it has been made on the old and fatal presupposition of the historicity of the myth; but, as made by Dr. Wright, it seemed well worth critical consideration. My critic disparages that and other propaganda as “commanding no *large* measure of assent anywhere.” My testimony, I fear, will not help Dr. Wright; but I will say that I found him an honest and extremely interesting writer, admirably free from theological malice, and above all exhibiting a thoroughly independent hold of his thesis. What amount of assent he has secured is an irrelevant issue. I can only say that I found him very readable. The scholarly and intellectual status of Dr. Flinders Petrie, again, is such as perhaps to make it unnecessary to say—as against similar disparagement in his case—that a thesis seriously and vigorously embraced by him as superseding the older documentary and oral hypotheses alike, seemed to me well entitled to consideration.]

The examination of the recent positions of independent writers seeking to construct a documentary theory has, I think, sufficed to safeguard the honest lay student of the myth-theory against the kind of spurious rebuttal set up by those who, themselves innocent of all original research, pretend that the fundamental historicity of

<sup>1</sup> Art. GOSPELS in *Encyc. Bibl.*, ii, col. 1869.

the gospels is established by a "consensus of scholarship." There is no consensus of scholarship. I observe that M. Loisy, to whom I devoted special study, is journalistically disparaged by the Very Rev. Dean Inge. That disparagement—which, I also observe, I have the undeserved honour to share—will not impose upon serious students, who will realize that Dean Inge, himself transparently unorthodox, has no resource in such matters but to disparage all who labour with any measure of rational purpose to put concrete conclusions where church dignitaries inevitably prefer to maintain rhetorical mystification. For the purposes of serious students, M. Loisy is an important investigator, Dean Inge a negligible essayist.

It is true that one of the positions I discussed—that of the school of Weiss—is not "new." But in that case the reason for selection was not merely that it was one of the efforts to reach something less neutral than the "two-documents hypothesis," but that it is in substance the position of some of the most recent and most virulent English critics of the myth-theory. It is in fact the gist of the polemic of Dr. Conybeare. I have shown, accordingly, that the thesis of a primary biography is psychologically absurd in itself; and, further, that like all the other documentary hypotheses it has been left high and dry by the latest German exegetes, who, expressly assuming the historicity of a Jesus, and founding on the gospels for their case, reduce these to a minimum of tradition at which M. Loisy must stand aghast. It is in England, in short, that the biographical school, as represented by Dean Inge and Dr. Conybeare, is seen to be most entirely out of touch with the movement of rational criticism.

It is in England, too, that we find the most uncritical reliance put upon the "impression of a personality"

said to be set up by the gospels. This argument is still used without any attempt at psychological self-analysis, any effort to find out what an impression is worth. A generation or two ago, exactly the same position was taken up in regard to the fourth gospel : both the Arnolds, for instance, were confident that the vision of Jesus there given was peculiarly real. Critical study has since forced all save the sworn traditionalists and the mere compromisers to the conclusion that it cannot be real if there is any substantial truth in the presentment of the synoptics. Slowly it has been realized that the methods which produce a vivid impression of " personality " are methods open to fictive art, and differ only in detail from the methods of the Bhagavat Gita or the methods of Homer. If a strong impression of a personality be a certificate of historicity, what of Zeus and Hêrê, Athênê and Achilles, Ulysses and Nestor? Most critics who handle the problem seem to work *in vacuo*, without regard to the phenomena and the machinery of fictive literature in general, even when they are moved to accept a hypothesis of fiction.

The vision presented in the fourth gospel is *prima facie* more lifelike than that of the synoptics, because its main author is more of an artist than his predecessors. It has been justly affirmed by Professor W. B. Smith that

The received notion that in the early Marcan narratives the Jesus is distinctly human, and that the process of deification is fulfilled in John, is precisely the reverse of the truth. In Mark there is really no man at all : the Jesus is God, or at least essentially divine, throughout. He wears only a transparent garment of flesh. Mark historizes only. Matthew also historizes and *faintly humanizes*. Luke more *strongly humanizes* ; while John not only *humanizes* but begins to *sentimentalize*.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ecce Deus*, p. 93.



Contemporary German scholars, such as Wellhausen, working on the synoptics, begin uneasily to note the lack of reality and verisimilitude in the presentment there given, avowing a deficit of biographical quality where English amateurs still heedlessly affirm a veridical naïveté. Wellhausen, tacitly clinging to the biographical assumption, gives up section after section of Mark, where our amateurs primitively acclaim as genuine biographic detail such an item as "asleep on the cushion" (Mk. iv, 38). Following another will-o'-the-wisp, Wellhausen is moved to claim the episode of the widow's mite (Lk. xxi, 1-4) as having biographical flavour, as if the admitted inventor of other Lucan episodes could not have doctrinally framed this. There is no *science* in such tentatives. They do but tell of a search for a subjective basis of belief when criticism has dissolved the objective bases of the old assumption.

When it is pretended, as by Dr. Conybeare, that the mythical theory rests on and grows solely out of the supernaturalist details in the gospel story, the case is simply falsified. This writer never seems to master his subject matter. Before Strauss, as by Strauss, the myth-theory was widely applied to non-supernatural matter; and to surmise a historical Jesus behind those details has been the first step in all modern inquiry. The assertion that the rejection of the historicity of Jesus "is not really the final conclusion of their [myth-theorists'] researches, but an initial unproved assumption"<sup>1</sup> is categorically false. Professor Smith's biographical statement negates it.<sup>2</sup> As I have repeatedly stated, I began without misgivings by assuming a historical Jesus, and sought historically to trace him, regarding the birth myth and the others as mere accretions. But the very first

<sup>1</sup> *Historical Christ*, p. 182.

<sup>2</sup> *Ecce Deus*, pref. p. ix.

step in the strictly historical inquiry revealed difficulties which the biographical school and the traditionalists alike had simply never faced. The questions whether Jesus was "of Nazareth," "Nazarene" in that sense, or "the Nazarite"; and why, if he was either of these, he was never so named in the epistles, stood in the very front of the problem, wholly unregarded by those who profess to trace a historical Jesus by historical method. The problem of "the twelve" is to this day passed with equal heedlessness by critics professing to work on historico-critical lines; and the question of the authenticity of the teachings is no more scientifically met. It was because at every step the effort to find historical foundation failed utterly that after years of investigation I sought and found in a thorough application of the myth-theory the solution of the enigma. Invariably that gives light where the historical assumption yields darkness.

It is thoroughly characteristic of the spirit in which some champions of the biographical view work that, in sequel to the falsification of the problem just noted, we have from them the plea that if we give up the historicity of Jesus, we must give up that of Solon and Pythagoras; and that "*obviously* Jesus has a far larger *chance* to have really existed than Solon."<sup>1</sup> Such a use of the conception of "chance" reveals the kind of dialectic we are dealing with. One recalls Newman's derision of the Paleyan position that the "chances" were in favour of there being a God. "If we deny all authenticity to Jesus's teaching," we are asked, "what of Solon's traditional lore?" Well, what of it? Is it to be authenticated by the threat that it must go if we deny that the Sermon on the Mount is a sermon at all? The fragments of Solon's verse purport to have been written

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Conybeare, *The Historical Christ*, p. 5.

by him : have we anything purporting to have been written by Jesus ? The very fact that we have only fragments of Solon is in itself an argument in favour of their genuineness : to Jesus any evangelist could ascribe any sayings at will.<sup>1</sup>

As usual, the critic falsifies the debate, affirming that “ *the stories of Plutarch about him [Solon] are, as Grote says, ‘contradictory as well as apocryphal.’* ” What Grote really says<sup>2</sup> is that Plutarch’s stories “ *as to the way in which Salamis was recovered* are contradictory as well as apocryphal.” He makes no such assertion as to the stories of Solon’s life in general, though, like every critical historian, he recognizes that many things were ultimately ascribed to Solon which belong to later times.<sup>3</sup> But the genuine fragments of Solon’s verse and laws are sound historical material. As Meyer claims,<sup>4</sup> the Archon list is as valid as the Roman *Fasti*. It is precisely because of the solid elements in the record that Solon stands as a historic figure, while Lycurgus is given up as a deity Evemerized.<sup>5</sup> On the principles of Dr. Conybeare, we must give up Solon because we give up Lycurgus, or accept Lykurgos if we accept Solon. Historical criticism does no such thing. It decides the cases on their merits by critical tests, and finds the fact of a Solonian legislation historically as certain as the Lycurgean is fabulous. The item that Solon’s family claimed to be descended from Poseidon is no ground for doubting the historicity of Solon, because such claims were normal in early Greece. Is it pretended that claims to be the Son of God were normal in later Jewry ?

The device of saying that we must accept the historicity

<sup>1</sup> *H.J.* 112, 113, 128, 157 sq., 177 sq.

<sup>2</sup> *Hist. of Greece*, 10 vol. ed. 1888, ii, 462.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.* p. 500.

<sup>4</sup> *Gesch. des Alterthums*, ii (1893), 649. See the context for the historic basis in general.

<sup>5</sup> *Id.* 427, 564.



of Jesus if we accept that of Solon is merely a new dressing of the old claim that we must believe in the resurrection if we believe in the assassination of Cæsar. Both theses rest on spurious analogies; and both alike defeat themselves, the older by carrying the implication that the prodigies at Cæsar's death are as historical as the assassination; the newer by involving the consequence that Solon accredits not only Lycurgus but Herakles and Dionysos, Ulysses and Achilles.

The argument from Pythagoras is a still more fatal device. Of him "it is no easy task to give an account that can claim to be regarded as history."<sup>1</sup> And "of the opinions of Pythagoras we know even less than of his life."<sup>2</sup> It is held to be certain that he taught the doctrine of transmigration and originated certain propositions in mathematics; but while the mathematical element has no analogue in the gospels, the residual view of Pythagoras as vending in religion only a "thoroughly primitive" set of taboos<sup>3</sup> would sanction, by analogy, the view that the real Jesus was the Talmudic Ben Pandira, who dates about 100 B.C., and was reputed a worker of wonders by sorcery. This is a sufficiently lame and impotent conclusion from a polemic in favour of the gospel Jesus, whom it leaves, in effect, a myth, as the myth-theory maintains. As for Apollonius of Tyana, one holds him historical<sup>4</sup> just because his myth-laden story is finally intelligible as history, which is precisely what the Jesus story is not.

This said, THE HISTORICAL JESUS may be left, as it is, open to critical refutation. The present volume is

<sup>1</sup> Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophy*, 2nd ed. p. 91. Cp. 93 sq.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* p. 100. Cp. 106-7, 123. <sup>3</sup> *Id.* p. 105. Cp. 109.

<sup>4</sup> *P.C.* 274 sq. A proselytizing Catholic Professor in Glasgow has represented me as denying the historicity of Apollonius, having reached that opinion by intuition.

theoretically constructive, and does not unnecessarily return upon the other. It is open in its turn to refutative criticism.

That description, it may be remarked, would not be accorded by me to a mere asseveration that there "must" be a historical basis for the gospels in a *person* answering broadly to the Gospel Jesus. Any one who confidently holds such a view need hardly trouble himself with the present thesis at all: and for me any one who affects to dispose of the issue by merely fulminating the "must" is simply begging the question. Those who, on the other hand, do but lean instinctively to such a belief may be respectfully invited to reconsider it in the light of all hierology. That there "must" be a historic process of causation behind every cult is a truism: it does not in the least follow that the historic basis must be the historicity of the God or Demigod round whose name the cult centres.

Many Saviour na es have been the centres of cults, in the ancient world as in the modern. There were extensive and long-lived worships of Herakles, Dionysos, Osiris, Attis, Adonis, in addition to the age-long cults of the "Supreme" Gods. Is it claimed that there "must" have been a historical Herakles, or Dionysos, or Adonis? If so, is it further contended that there must have been a historical Jehovah, a Jove, a Cybelê, a Juno, a Venus? If the Father-Gods and Mother-Gods could be evolved by protracted mythopœia, why not the Son-Gods?

It is perfectly true, as was urged by the late Sir Alfred Lyall, that in India and elsewhere distinguished men may to this day be deified; that ancestor-worship played a great part in God-making; and that tribal Gods are in many cases probably evolved from distinguished chiefs. But such cases really defeat the inference drawn from them. Such God-making can in no instance be shown

ever to have set up what can reasonably be termed a world-religion. The world-religions are the product of a far more protracted and complex causation. They grow from far further-reaching roots. Above all, they have never grown up without the services either of a numerous priesthood or of Sacred Books, or of both.

Is it then contended that a Sacred Book must represent the originative teaching of a real person and his disciples? It may or may not; but what does not at all follow is that the personality deified or extolled in the Sacred Book was real. Mohammed was a real person: he made no claim to deity: he acclaimed an established God. The names of Zoroaster and Buddha were probably not those of real persons: the first figures as a cult-building priest; the second as a Teacher, enshrined from the first in a luxuriant myth, whence his practical deification. In both cases the specific centre of the religion is the Book or Books; and it is beyond question that in both cases many hands wrought on these. To say that only a primary personality of abnormal greatness could have inspired the writing of the books is really equivalent to saying that there must have been a historical Jehovah to account for the Old Testament, and a historical Allah to account for the Koran. Let it be freely granted that the *writers* of Sacred Books were in many cases remarkable personalities. That is a totally different proposition from the one we are considering.

The claim that the gospels *could* only have originated round the memory of an inspiring and love-creating personality is in effect an evasion of the multitudinous facts of hierology. The European who sees nothing in the fact that the mythic Krishna is loved by millions of Hindoos; that in ages of antiquity millions of worshippers were absorbed in the love of Dionysos, mutilated them-

selves for Attis, and wept for Adonis, is not really ready for a verdict on what "must" have been as regards the building up of any cult. Are the Psalms, once more, a testimony to the historicity of Jehovah, or is the hymn of Hippolytos to Artemis, in Euripides, a proof of anything but that men can love an imagination?

The special claim for a historical Jesus arises out of the very fact that Jesus alone among the Saviour Gods of antiquity (Buddha being excluded from that category) is celebrated in a set of Sacred Books in which he figures as at once a Sacrificed God and a Teaching God.<sup>1</sup> But the worships of the Saviours Dionysos and Herakles and Adonis, *without* Sacred Books (apart from temple liturgies), were as confident as the worship of Jesus. Is the production of Sacred Books in itself any more of a testimony to a Saviour God's human actuality than the worship with which they are associated?

Historically speaking, the emergence of Sacred Books as accompaniments of a popular cultus is a result of special culture conditions. In the case of Judaism these have never been scientifically traced, by reason of the presuppositions of the past.<sup>2</sup> But we can trace later cases. Early Christism founded primarily on the Sacred Books of Judaism; and it *needed* to produce books of its own if it was to survive as against the overshadowing parent cult. Save for these books, Christism would have disappeared as did Mithraism, of which the scanty hieratic literature remained occult, liturgical, unpopular, where Christism was committed to publicity by the Jewish lead. To make of Sacred Books produced under those special conditions a special argument for the historicity of their

<sup>1</sup> The Bhagavat Gita, which glorifies Krishna, is late relatively to the cult.

<sup>2</sup> Cp. Gunkel, *Zum religionsgeschichtlichen Verständnis des N.T.*, 1903, p. 5 sq.

contents, or of their narrative groundwork, is to embrace the fallacy of the single instance. And when the contents utterly fail to sustain the tests of rational documentary criticism, to fall back on a "must" for certification of the actuality of the figure they deify is merely to renounce critical reason.

The rational problem is to account historically for the projection as a whole, to explain the main features and as many minor details as may be, as we explain the "personality" and the myth of Herakles or Samson or Adonis, the doctrines and fictions of the Books of Ruth and Esther, the religions of Krishna and Mithra and Quetzalcoatl. We are now compendiously to make the attempt.

M. Loisy has declared <sup>1</sup> that "One can explain to oneself Jesus : one cannot explain to oneself those who invented him." In the previous volume it has been contended that M. Loisy has decisively failed to "explain Jesus" as a possible person : in this we essay to explain "those who invented him." M. Loisy is an illustrious New-Testament scholar : he is not a mythologist or a comparative hierologist. It is very likely that he would find it difficult to explain to himself those who invented Tezcatlipoca ; but it would hardly follow that Tezcatlipoca was not invented. In point of fact, a large portion of M. Loisy's own important critical performance consists precisely in explaining away as *inventions* a multitude of items in the gospel narrative. He can understand invention of many parts, and admits that unless removed they make an incongruous whole. There is really no more difficulty in explaining the other parts as similar inventions than in explaining these. Thus the alleged difficulty is illusory.

<sup>1</sup> *Apropos d'histoire des religions*, p. 290.



The occupation of "explaining to oneself" imaginary beings has been the occupation of theologians through whole millenniums. There can still be found even a hierologist or two who believe in the historicity of Krishna; as the judicious Mosheim in the eighteenth century confidently believed in the historicity of Mercury and Mithra. Those—and they are many—who are now content to see myth in the figures of Mithra and Krishna, with or without the nimbus of Sacred Books, may on that score consent to consider the thesis of this volume.

It will be no adequate answer to that to say, as will doubtless be said, that the outline of the evolution of the myth is unsatisfying. In the very nature of the case, the connections of the data must be speculative. It may well be that those here attempted—some of them modifications of previous theories—will have to be at various points reshaped; and I invite the reader to weigh carefully the views of Professors Drews and Smith where I diverge from them. The complete establishment of a historical construction will be a long and difficult task. But in its least satisfying aspect the myth-theory is a scientific substitution for what is wholly *dissatisfying*—the entirely unhistorical construction furnished by the gospels.

That has been under revision for a hundred and fifty years, with an outlay of labour that is appalling to think of, in view of the utter futility of the search—or, let us say, the labour in proportion to the result, for toil even upon false clues has yielded some knowledge that avails for rectification. But the labour has meant a steadily dwindling confidence in a dwindling residuum of supposed fact; though every shortening of the line of defence has evoked furious outcry from the unthinking faithful. The first pious framers of "harmonies" of the gospels

were indignantly told by the more stupid pious that there was no strife to harmonize : the Schmiedels and Loisy of to-day, striving their hardest to save something by rational methods from the rational advance, are execrated by those who believe more than they. The more instructed believers are as warm in their resentment of the latest and coolest negative criticism as were their fathers towards the contemptuous exposure of the contradictions of " inspiration." Anger, it would seem, always leaps to the help of shaken confidence. Let the believer perpend.

It is not orthodoxy that is to-day fighting the case of the historicity of Jesus. Orthodoxy is committed to the miraculous, to Revelation, to the Incarnation, the Virgin Birth, the Resurrection, and, if it would be consistent, to the Ascension, which is on the same plane of belief. Upon such assumptions, there can be no critical defence worthy of the name. The defence is being conducted mainly by the avowed or non-avowed Neo-Unitarians of the various churches and countries ; and these are simply standing either at the position taken up fifty years ago by Renan, whose " biography " of Jesus was received with a far more widespread and no less violent storm of censure than that now being turned upon the myth-theory ; or at the more nearly negative position of Strauss, which was still more fiercely censured. Renan's position, or Strauss's, is now the position of the mass of " moderate " scholars and students. Those who have thus seen a denounced heresy become the standpoint of ordinary scholarly belief should be slow to conclude that a newer heresy will not in time find similar acceptance.

## CHAPTER II

### THE CENTRAL MYTH

#### § 1. *The Ground of Conflict*

FOR the purposes of this inquiry, all miracles, strictly so-called, are out of discussion. This does not mean that the myth-theory of Jesus is an outcome of atheistic philosophy. One of the most brilliant of modern books on Jesus is the work of an avowed atheist,<sup>1</sup> who accepted substantially the whole of the non-supernatural presentment of Jesus in the gospels, taking it to be a bad biography, and subjecting the doctrine to keen but sympathetic criticism. This writer, dismissing miracles as outside debate, had a conviction of the historicity of Jesus which was in no way affected by a knowledge of modern documentary criticism. On the other hand, Professor Arthur Drews, author of *THE CHRIST MYTH*, expressly claims to urge the myth-theory in the interest of theistic religion. Of course he too dismisses miracles as outside discussion.

Those who are still concerned to discuss them, and to affirm such beliefs as those of the Virgin Birth and the Resurrection, should turn their attention to the well-known work of the late W. R. Cassels, *SUPERNATURAL RELIGION*,<sup>2</sup> in which the whole supernaturalist case, in its double aspect of "revelation" and miracles, is examined with an abundance of learning, patience,

<sup>1</sup> *Jesus*, by William Renton. Pub. by author, Keswick, 1879.

<sup>2</sup> Rep. by R.P.A. 1907.



and candour. Disparaged in its day by professional orthodox scholars, that treatise has so completely done its special work in the general criticism of supernaturalist faith that, however common orthodoxy may still be, the matter is now little debated among instructed men. Those who still hold the orthodox position, therefore, are not here addressed. Our inquiry invites the attention only of those who, abandoning the supernaturalist basis of the Christian creed, seek to retain (it may be as the ground for a transformed "Christianity") (1) the human personality which they believe to have underlain the admitted myths of the record, and (2) the teachings—or some of them—ascribed to the God-Man of the Gospels. The problem is one of historical criticism, and does not turn upon theism or atheism. The historicity of Jesus is maintained not only by "Christians" of various degrees of heterodoxy but by some professed rationalists; by critics eminent for judicial temper, as by Professor Schmiedel of Zürich; and on the other hand by Dr. F. C. Conybeare.

These critics agree in regarding Jesus as a natural man, naturally born, and it is to them that we must reply. When an orthodox Christian like the Rev. Dr. T. J. Thorburn, holding by the Annunciation and the Virgin Birth, sets himself to rebut the myth-theory<sup>1</sup> by scouting myth analogies, it would be idle to argue with him. A writer who can believe he has evidence for a story of human parthenogenesis has no conception of evidence in common with us. It is accordingly needless to point out that he constantly and absurdly misunderstands the myth argument;<sup>2</sup> that he discusses

<sup>1</sup> *The Mythical Interpretation of the Gospels*, 1916.

<sup>2</sup> *E.g.* He takes as applying to Jesus (p. 377) a remark applied expressly and solely to the myth of Herakles.

Evemerism without knowing what it means;<sup>1</sup> and that he merely juggles with such cruces as the stories of the Transfiguration and the Ascension. From one at his standpoint we can expect nothing else; and to those whom his exposition satisfies no myth-theory can appeal. When he resorts to the device of denying "spiritual insight" to those who accept scientific tests, he merely exemplifies the normal procedure of orthodox incompetence. The religious reasoner who flouts reason usually certifies and betrays himself in that inexpensive fashion. Our argument is addressed to those who profess to apply to Biblical matters the principles of historical criticism.

The biographical school, as one may inoffensively term the variously minded champions of the historicity of the record, abandon the Virgin Birth and the Resurrection as impossibilities. That is to say, they *accept* the myth-theory as regards those two cardinal items of the Christian legend. They also in general recognize that the fourth gospel, in so far as it differs vitally from the synoptics, is in the main a process of myth-making. But, clinging to the alleged substratum, most members of the school adhere to the fundamental historicity of the Crucifixion. Here they stand with Strauss, who found in the execution of Jesus by Pontius Pilate a solid historical fact. Strauss is generally explicit as to his reasons for accepting and rejecting; and while he resolves into myth at least nine-tenths of the gospel narratives, finding them mere inventions to "fulfil" supposed Old Testament predictions, he finds the testimony of Tacitus unquestionable as to the execution.<sup>2</sup>

Now, the ANNALS of Tacitus is itself a questioned

<sup>1</sup> Work cited, p. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Second *Leben Jesu*, § 91 (3te Aufl. p. 569).

document; but even if we take it as unquestionable it is admittedly only a late statement of a narrative already made current by the Christists, the ANNALS being commonly dated about 120 C.E. Either Tacitus was founding on a Roman record of the Crucifixion or he was merely saying what Christists said as to the origin of their sect. If the latter, he supplies no historical basis. On the other hand, the unlikelihood of there being a Roman record of executions in Palestine ninety years before is so great that no Christian advocate now appears to affirm it. Tacitus in fact gives no sign of consulting official records,<sup>1</sup> his only traceable sources being previous historians, notably Suetonius. Thus Strauss's express ground for accepting the execution of a "Christ" by Pontius Pilate is really illusory; and when we further find him pronouncing that the Barabbas episode must be held fundamentally historical because it is "so firmly rooted in the early Christian tradition,"<sup>2</sup> we are again compelled to reject his test. As we shall see, the Barabbas episode is unintelligible as history, but highly intelligible as myth. At the very outset, then, unverified assumptions are seen to be made by the biographical school as to what may confidently be taken as historical, even when, as in the case of Strauss, they affirm an abundance of myth.

Where Strauss was rash, later rationalistic writers have been more so. My old friend, the English translator of Jules Soury's early work on Jesus, took for granted that behind legendary heroes in general there is always a nucleus of fact; but Soury, after postulating a large part of the gospel story as veridical, gave up a number of his own items.<sup>3</sup> As soon as he began to apply

<sup>1</sup> See refs. in Drews, *The Witnesses to the Historicity of Jesus*, Eng. trans. p. 23.

<sup>2</sup> As cited, p. 572.

<sup>3</sup> *Jesus and Israel*, Eng. tr., pp. viii, ix, 29.

criticism, they were seen to be arbitrary assumptions. Equally arbitrary is the assumption of "some basis," made upon no scientific principle.

The biographical school in general adhere at least to the trial and condemnation before Pilate, though many abandon as fiction the trial before the Sanhedrim, which indeed was abandoned as long ago as the third gospel, in favour of an equally fictitious trial before Herod. As is seen by M. Loisy, the trial before Pilate is for the historical critic the keystone of the tragedy story. If that goes, there remains only a highly composite body of teaching, with no identifiable historical personality to which to attach it.

But even as regards the trials there is wide divergence among the biographical school. For instance, Mr. Charles Stanley Lester, an ex-clergyman of Milwaukee, in his interesting work *THE HISTORIC JESUS*,<sup>1</sup> entirely rejects the Sanhedrim trial, and likewise the gospel account of the Pilate trial, but finds "probable history" in the view that the priests privately persuaded Pilate to condemn Jesus on their accusation without any trial.<sup>2</sup> Again, the anonymous author of *THE FOUR GOSPELS AS HISTORICAL RECORDS*,<sup>3</sup> an eminently keen, searching, and candid critic, rejects alike the Judas story, the trial before the Sanhedrim, and the trial before Pilate,<sup>4</sup> as he does most of the other items of the gospel history, yet throughout seems to take for granted the historicity of the "Great Teacher," the "Master," never even raising that issue save in protesting that he has absolutely nothing to say against him.<sup>5</sup> So completely does he destroy the whole narrative, indeed, that he can hardly

<sup>1</sup> Putnams, 1912. I had not met with this work when I chose my own title, *The Historical Jesus*, else I should have framed another.

<sup>2</sup> Work cited, pp. 335-353.

<sup>3</sup> Williams and Norgate, 1895.

<sup>4</sup> Work cited, p. 420.

<sup>5</sup> *Id.* p. 17, etc.

be said to maintain the thesis of historicity, but he never calls it in question: he merely destroys the biography. Mr. Lester, on the other hand, confidently rejects a hundred details as myth, claiming that he presents the gospels "relieved of the drapery of mythology and set free from all dogmatic fictions";<sup>1</sup> and yet no less confidently affirms a hundred "undoubted" things, in a manner that almost outgoes M. Loisy.

If, faced by such procedures, the critical reader asks upon what grounds the historical personality is accepted, he gets from the able anonymous writer no answer, and from Mr. Lester, in effect, only the answer that the teachings which appeal to him in the gospels are self-certified as coming from the "Jesus" in whom he believes, while the others are dismissed by him as inconsistent with his conception. As a rule, the negative criticism is soundly reasoned; the constructive is purely arbitrary. Yet Mr. Lester is an amiable and—apart from his quaint animosity towards "the Semitic mind"<sup>2</sup>—a temperate critic, warmly concerned for historic truth and loyally opposed to all kinds of priestcraft, ancient and modern. What we must ask from such critics is that they should bring to bear on their biographical assumption the same critical method that they bring to bear on the multitude of details which strike them as obviously unhistorical. Rejecting miracles and self-contradictory narrative, they affirm a miraculous and self-contradictory Person. That conception too must be analysed.

The Jesus of the Gospels is at once a Messiah (with no definite mission as such), a Saviour God with whom

<sup>1</sup> *The Historic Jesus*, p. vii.

<sup>2</sup> In this connection he puts the theory—derived from the celebrated Herr Chamberlain—that Jesus was not a Jew but an "Amorite."



the indefinite Messiah coalesces, and a Teaching God who coalesces with both. The biographical school, in the mass, posit a human Teacher, round whose teaching a Messianic conception combined with a doctrine of salvation by blood sacrifice has nucleated. If in this tissue there cannot be inserted the historical detail of the trial before Pilate, there is nothing left but the quasi-mythical detail of the crucifixion as an ostensible historical basis for the Messianic and other teaching, so much of which is alien to the early cult, so much of which is critically to be assigned to previous and contemporary Jewish sources, and so much to later Jesuist editors and compilers. Those laymen who are content to pick out of the gospels certain teachings, such as the Sermon on the Mount, and call these "Christianity," have not realized how completely documentary analysis has disintegrated the teachings into pre-Jesuine Jewish and post-Jesuine Gentile matter. The latest professional analysis, as we have seen, leaves no Jesuine "Teaching" save an eschatology, a doctrine of "last things," coming from a visionary Messiah with no political or social message.<sup>1</sup> The bulk of the biographical school, on the other hand, cling diversely to "something" in the Teaching which shall be somehow commensurate with the "impression" made by the life and death of the Teacher, which, from Renan onwards, they regard as the real genesis of the myth of the Resurrection and the consequent cult.

Having shown, then, the cogent critical reasons for dismissing the entire record of the triple episode of the Supper, the Agony, and the Trials, as unhistorical,<sup>2</sup> it

<sup>1</sup> *H.J.* chs. xvii and xix.

<sup>2</sup> *H.J.* 199. On this compare *The Four Gospels as Historical Records*, chs. vi-xiii.

concerns us to show (1) that the whole is intelligible only as myth, and (2) how the myth probably arose. The sequence culminates in the Crucifixion, which, with the Sacrament, is for the rational hierologist as for the orthodox theologian the centre of Christianity. Equally the biographical school are committed to maintaining the historicity of the event, without which they cannot explain the rise of the cult. If then the myth-theory is to stand, it must show that the central narrative belongs to the realm of myth.

## § 2. *The Sacrificial Rite*

In the Christian record, the Crucifixion is essentially a sacrifice. "The essence of the Sacrament is not merely partaking of a common cup or a common meal, but feasting upon a sacrifice . . . and this was found everywhere among Jews and Gentiles."<sup>1</sup> Thus the term "Eucharist," which means "thanksgiving" or "thank-offering," applied in the TEACHING OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES to the kind of sacrament there indicated, and thence taken by Justin and other Fathers, is clearly a misnomer for the thing specified in the gospels. Of the gospel sacrifice, the sacrament is the liturgical and symbolic application.<sup>2</sup> Or, otherwise, the crucifixion is the fulfilment of the theory of the sacrament. On the view of the historicity of the former, or of both, it would be necessary to show why the procedure set forth in the

<sup>1</sup> Canon Cheetham, *Hulsean Lectures on The Mysteries*, 1897, p. 115.

<sup>2</sup> "The primitive idea of the sacrificial meal, namely, that it is by participation in the blood of the god that the spirit of the god enters into his worshipper."—Prof. Jevons, *Introd. to the Hist. of Religion*, 1896, p. 291. "Originally the death of the god was nothing else than the death of the theanthropic victim."—Robertson Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, 1889, p. 394.



gospels so closely simulated a human sacrifice; and this is incidentally attempted in passing by M. Loisy. The scene of derision by the soldiers, he says, "was perhaps connected with some pagan festival usage."<sup>1</sup> But this at once admits the entrance of the myth-theory, which affirms that an immemorial "festival" usage is indicated. If Jesus was executed to please the Jewish multitude, as is the view even of the most destructive of the later German exegetes<sup>2</sup>—why should the execution take a pagan form? M. Loisy, who had previously accepted as history the narrative of the Entry into Jerusalem, with the public acclamation of Jesus as "the Son of David," is unprepared to believe with the German critic that within a week the multitude cried "Crucify him!"; and he therefore wholly eliminates that item from his biographical sketch. He implies, however, that the doom of Jesus was passed by Pilate to please the priests, which is equally fatal to the thesis of a pagan festival usage. He accepts, further, the scene of the Mocking, with no ostensible critical reason, but presumably in order to establish a history which would explain the subsequent growth of the cult. In this process the salient episode of Barabbas is dismissed by him as unhistorical.<sup>3</sup>

Thus the most distinguished critic of the biographical school has no account to give of a second salient item in the record which, being entirely non-supernatural, must be held to have been inserted for some strong reason. It in fact closely involves the whole myth-theory. Barabbas was in all probability a regular figure in Semitic popular religion; and the name connects documentarily with that of Jesus. The reading "Jesus

<sup>1</sup> *Jésus et la tradition évangélique*, 1910, p. 106.

<sup>2</sup> *H.J.* 202-3.

<sup>3</sup> Loisy, p. 171.

Barabbas," in Mt. xxvii, 16, as we have noted,<sup>1</sup> was long the accepted one in the ancient Church; and its entrance and its disappearance are alike significant. It is obviously probable that such a name as "Jesus the Son of the Father" (= Bar-Abbas<sup>2</sup>), applied to a murderer, would give an amount of offence to early Christian readers which would naturally lead in time to its elimination from the current text.<sup>3</sup> But on that view there is no explanation of its entrance. Such a stumbling-block could not have been set up without a compulsive reason.

The anthropological and hierological data go to show that an annual sacrifice of a "Son of the Father" was a long-standing feature in the Semitic world. A story in Philo Judæus about a mummery in Alexandria in ridicule of the Jewish King Agrippa, the grandson of Herod, points pretty clearly to a local Jewish survival from that usage. A lunatic named Karabas is said to have been paraded as a mock-king, with mock-crown, sceptre and robe.<sup>4</sup> In all likelihood the *K* is a mis-transcription for *B*. In any case, "the custom of sacrificing the son for the father was common, if not universal, among Semitic peoples,"<sup>5</sup> as among others; and the Passover<sup>6</sup> was originally a sacrifice of firstlings, human and animal,<sup>7</sup> the former being probably most prevalent in times of disaster. "Devotion" was the principle: surrogate sacrifices would normally be substituted. Sacrifice of a king's son, in particular, was held to be of

<sup>1</sup> See refs. in *H.J.* 171; others in *G.B.* ix. 420 *n.* An overwhelming case for the reading "Jesus (the) Barabbas" is established by E. B. Nicholson, *The Gospel according to the Hebrews*, 1879, pp. 141-2.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Lester translates "Son of a Teacher," but this (adopted by Brandt) is an evasive rendering. He thinks the story, even if true, had no connection with the condemnation of Jesus.

<sup>3</sup> Cp. Nicholson, as cited, p. 142.

<sup>4</sup> *G.B.* ix, 418; *P.C.* 146.

<sup>5</sup> *G.B.* ix, 419.

<sup>6</sup> *Id.* iv, ch. vi; *P.C.* 124.

<sup>7</sup> *P.C.* 152, 64; *G.B.* iv (Pt. III, *The Dying God*), 170 *sq.*

overwhelming efficacy by early Hebrews and other Semites, as among other races in the savage and barbaric stages.<sup>1</sup>

There is nothing peculiar to the Semites either in the general or in the particular usage, both being once nearly universal; but it is with the Semites that we are here specially concerned. The story of Abraham and Isaac, to say nothing of that of Jephthah's daughter, is a finger-post in the evolution of religion, being inferribly a humane myth to promote the substitution of animal for human sacrifice. And the Phœnician myth of "Ieoud," the "only-begotten" son of King Kronos, "whom the Phœnicians call Israel," sacrificed by his father at a time of national danger, after being dressed in the trappings of royalty,<sup>2</sup> points towards the historic roots of Christianity. Again and again we meet the conception of the "only-begotten" "Son of the Father"—Father Abraham, Father Kronos, Father Israel, the Father-King—as a special sacrifice in Hebrew and other Semitic history. Kronos is a Semitic God; and in connection with the Roman Saturnalia we have the record of a Greek oracle commanding to "send a man to the Father"—that is, to Kronos.<sup>3</sup>

What is certain is that sacrifices of kings, which were at one stage of social evolution normal,<sup>4</sup> inevitably tended to take other tribal or communal forms; and a multitude of rites preserved plain marks of the regal origin. Kings would inevitably pass off their original tragic burden; the community, bent on the safeguard of sacrifice, shifted it in turn.<sup>5</sup> Sacrifice of some kind, it was felt, there must

<sup>1</sup> *P.C.* 161. Cp. Turner, *Samoa*, 1884, 274-5; *G.B.* iv, ch. vi.

<sup>2</sup> *P.C.* 137, 161, 186; *G.B.* iv (Pt. III), 166.

<sup>3</sup> Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, i, 7. Cp. Varro, cit. by Lactantius, *Div. Inst.* i, 21.

<sup>4</sup> *G.B.* iv, 14 sq., 46 sq., x, 1 sq.

<sup>5</sup> Cp. Ward's *View of the Religion of the Hindoos*, 5th ed. 1863, p. 92.

be, to avert divine wrath : <sup>1</sup> that conviction lies at the base of the Christian as of the Jewish religion : it is fundamental to all primitive religion ; and it is happily beyond our power to realize save symbolically the immeasurable human slaughter that the religious conviction has involved.

Primarily, voluntary victims were desired ; and in Roman and Japanese history there are special or general records of their being forthcoming, annually or in times of emergency.<sup>2</sup> Even in the case of animal sacrifice, the Romans had a trick of putting barley in the victim's ear to make him bow his head as if in submission.<sup>3</sup> But as regards human sacrifices, which were felt to be specially efficacious, the progression was inevitable from willing to compelled victims ; and out of the multitude of the forms of human sacrifice, for which war captives and slaves at some stages supplied a large proportion of the victims, we single that of the evolution from the voluntary scape-goat or the sacrificed king or messenger, through the victim "bought with a price," to the released criminal or other desperate or resigned person bribed with a period of licence and abundance to die for the community at the end of it.

In many if not in most of these cases, deification of the victim was involved in the theory, the victim being customarily identified with the God.<sup>4</sup> It was so in certain special sacrifices in pre-Christian Mexico.<sup>5</sup> It was so in the human sacrifices of the Khonds of Orissa, which subsisted till about the middle of last century.<sup>6</sup> In the latter instance, of which we have precise record,

<sup>1</sup> See *P.C.* 105 sq. as to the various motives of human sacrifice.

<sup>2</sup> Livy, viii, 9, 10 ; Lafcadio Hearn, *Japan*, 166 ; *P.C.*, 138.

<sup>3</sup> Cp. Kalisch, *Comm. on Leviticus*, 1867, i, 366 ; *P.C.* 121.

<sup>4</sup> Robertson Smith, *Semites*, 391 ; F. B. Jevons, *Introd. to Hist. of Religion*, pp. 274-93.

<sup>5</sup> *P.C.* 363.

<sup>6</sup> *Id.* 108 sq.

the annual victims were taken from families devoted by purchase to the function, or were bought as children and brought up for the purpose. They were "bought with a price." When definitely allotted, the males were permitted absolute sexual liberty, being regarded as already virtually deified. The victim was finally slain "for the sins of the world," and was liturgically declared a God in the process.

Such rites gradually dwindled in progressive communities from ritual murders into ritual mysteries or masquerades; even as human sacrifices in general, in most parts of the world, dwindled from bodies to parts of bodies, fingers, hair, foreskins; from human to animal victims;<sup>1</sup> from larger to smaller animals; from these to fowls; from real animals to baked or clay models, fruits, grains, sheafs of rushes, figures, paper or other symbols. It seems usually to have been humane kings or chiefs who imposed the improvement on priesthoods. And as with the victim, so with the sacramental meal which accompanied so many sacrifices. Cannibal sacraments were once, probably, universal: they have survived down till recent times in certain regions; but with advance in civilization they early and inevitably tend to become merely symbolic. In Mexico at the advent of Cortes, both the cannibal and the symbolic forms subsisted—the former under conventional limitations; the latter in the practice of eating a baked image which had been raised on a cross and there pierced, for sanctification.<sup>2</sup> This "Eating of the God" was very definitely a sacrament; but so were the cannibalistic sacraments which preceded it.

<sup>1</sup> Cp. *G.B.* Pt. III, *The Dying God* (vol. iv), 166 n., 214 sq.; *P.C.* 116-117, 140.

<sup>2</sup> *P.C.* 364-8.



Surveying the general evolution, we reach the inference that somewhere in Asia Minor there subsisted before "our era" a cult or cults in which a "Son of the Father" was annually sacrificed under one or other of the categories of human sacrifice—Scapegoat, representative Firstling, Vegetation God, or Messenger; possibly in some cases under all four aspects in one. The usage may or may not have subsisted in post-exilic Jerusalem: quite possibly it did, for not only do the Sacred Books avow constant popular and legal resort to "heathen" practices of human sacrifice,<sup>1</sup> but Jewish religious lore preserves in a variety of forms clear evidence of institutions of human sacrifice which are not recognized in the Sacred Books.<sup>2</sup> In any case, in connection with the particular cult or rite in question there subsisted also a Eucharist or Sacrament or Holy Supper, analogous to the sacraments of the cults of Mithra, Dionysos, Attis, and many other Gods.<sup>3</sup> At a remote period it had been strictly cannibalistic: in course of time, it became symbolical. In other words, originally the sacrificed victim was sacramentally eaten; in course of time the thing eaten was something else, with at most a ritual formula of "body and blood." At a certain stage, whether by regal or other compulsion or by choice of the devotees, the annual rite of sacrifice became a mere ritual or Mystery Drama—as in other cases it became a public masquerade. The former evolution underlay the religions of Dionysos, Osiris, Adonis, and Attis: *the latter may or may not have gone on alongside of the former.*

What does emerge from the gospel narrative concerning Barabbas and Jesus is, not that such an episode

<sup>1</sup> Cp. Kalisch, as cited; *G.B.*, as last cited; Ps. 106, etc.

<sup>2</sup> *P.C.* 158 sq. Hebrews, ix, 7, 25, suggests a cryptic meaning for the sacrifice of atonement.

<sup>3</sup> As to Hebrew private sacraments, see *P.C.* 168 sq.

happened : here the myth-theory is at one with M. Loisy, who in effect pronounces the narrative to be myth : but that in the first age of Christianity the name " Jesus Barabbas " was well known, and stood for something well known. It was certainly known to the Jews, for we have Talmudical mention, dating from a period just after the fall of the Temple, that there was a Jewish ritual " Week of the Son, or, as some call it, *Jesus the Son*," in connection with the circumcision and redemption of the first-born child.<sup>1</sup> From the inference of the currency of the name there is no escape : attached to a robber and murderer it could never have got into the gospels otherwise. And the myth-theory can supply the explanation which neither the orthodox nor the biographical theory can yield. We have outside evidence that a sacrifice of a " Son of the Father " was customary in parts of the Semitic world. What the gospel story *proves* is that it was known to have been a *practice*, either at Jerusalem or elsewhere, to release a prisoner to the multitude in connection with a popular festival, which might or might not have been the Passover. The release may have been for the purpose either of a religious masquerade or of a sacrifice. Either way, the religious rite involved was a rite of " Jesus Barabbas "—Jesus the Son of the Father—and it involved either a real or a mock sacrifice, in which the " Son " figured as a mock king, with robe and crown.

The more the problem is considered, then, the more clear becomes the solution. As soon as the Jesuist cult reached the stage of propaganda in which it described its Son-God as having died, in circumstances of ignominy, as an atoning sacrifice, it would be met by the memory

<sup>1</sup> *P.C.* 166. I do not find that Mr. R. T. Herford deals with this matter in his valuable work on *Christianity in Talmud and Midrash*, 1903.



of the actual Barabbas rite. Given that the Barabbas victim was ritually scourged and "crucified" (a term which has yet to be investigated), it follows that wherever the early propaganda<sup>1</sup> went in areas in which the memory of the rite subsisted, the Christists would be told that their Jesus the Son was simply the Jesus Barabbas of that popular rite; and the only possible—or at least the best—way to override the impeachment was to insert a narrative which reduced the regular ritual Jesus Barabbas to a single person, a criminal whom the wicked Jewish multitude had chosen to save instead of the sinless Jesus of the cult. In the circumstances given it was an absolutely necessary invention; and no other circumstances could conceivably have made it necessary. The story, by the unwilling admission of M. Loisy, who conserves whatever he thinks he critically can of the record, is a myth; and it is a myth which on the biographical theory cannot be explained. The myth-theory has explained it. As for the disappearance of the "Jesus" from the name of Barabbas in the records, it hardly needs explanation. When the memory of the old annual rite died away from general knowledge, the elision of the "Jesus" would be desirable alike for the learned who still knew and the unlearned who did not.<sup>2</sup>

### § 3. *Contingent Elements*

It is needless for the defender of the biographical theory to interject a protest that the Barabbas story is

<sup>1</sup> See below, p. 104, as to the inferrible early forms of the propaganda of the crucifixion.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Joseph McCabe (*Sources of Gospel Morality*, p. 21) argues against the myth-theory that the early Rabbis never question the historicity of Jesus. But it is extremely likely that early Rabbis *did* use the Barabbas argument before the gospel story was framed. In an age destitute of historical literature and of critical method or practice, it sufficed to turn their flank.

only one item in the case. The other items will all be dealt with in turn: that has been put in the front because of its crucial significance. Incidentally it may be further noted that the myth-theory explains the plainly unhistorical item of "the thirty pieces of silver," confusedly explained from "the prophet Jeremy" as "the price of him that was priced, whom [certain] of the children of Israel did price" (Mt. xxvii, 9). The reference is really to Zechariah (xi, 12, 13).

The story of the Betrayal is fiction on the very face of the narrative, Judas being employed to point out a personage of declared notoriety, about whose movements there had been no secrecy.<sup>1</sup> Judas is demonstrably a somewhat late figure in the gospel legend, coming from the later Mystery Drama, not from the rite on which it was built. But, whatever may be the solution of the cryptogram about the potter's field and the thirty pieces of silver in Zechariah, or the historic fact about Acel-dama, one thing is clear: "the price of him that was priced," in Matthew, tells of the usage of paying a price for sacrificial victims.

It does not follow that a price was regularly paid in the case of the Jesus Barabbas rite, though the record actually insists on the item by way of the Judas story: what is clear is that a memory of bought victims subsisted after the fall of Jerusalem. It is not unlikely that "Acel-dama" was a field where sacrificial victims were either slain or buried, or both. A passage in the Kalika Purana suggests the procedure, and the probable significance of Golgotha, the "place of skulls." In the Hindu rite, the human victim was immolated "at a

<sup>1</sup> *C.M.* 352, § 21, and refs. A fair "biographical" inference would be that the betrayed Jesus had been an obscure person, not publicly known. This inference, however, is never drawn.

cemetery or holy place," upon which the sacrificer was not to look; and the head was presented in "*the place of skulls*, sacred to Bhoiruvu" (God of Fear). This could be in a special temple, or in a part of the cemetery, "or on a mountain."<sup>1</sup>

At this point a warning must be given against the confusion set up by the habitual assumption that "something of the kind" occurred under Pontius Pilate. It is only on the biographical theory that that date is valid. Pontius Pilate is simply a figure in the later Mystery Drama, originally chosen, probably, because of his notoriety as a shedder of Jewish blood.<sup>2</sup> We are not bound to prove that at his date the usage of ritual human sacrifice, real or pretended, survived at Jerusalem, though it may have done, as it survived at Rhodes in the time of Porphyry in the form, perhaps, of a Semitic mystery drama.<sup>3</sup>

It is the assumption of the historicity of the Crucifixion that partly disarms the theorem of Sir J. G. Frazer as to a coincidence of Jewish sacrificial rites.<sup>4</sup> Noting that the details of the Crucifixion closely conform to those of a human sacrifice sometimes practised in the Christian era in connection with the Roman Saturnalia, and also to those of a real or mock rite connected with the Babylonian feast of the Sacæa, he resorts to the alternative hypotheses (a) that the analogous Jewish feast of Purim, imported from Babylon after the Return, and also involving either a real or a mock crucifixion, *chanced to coincide with the actual crucifixion* of the gospel Jesus; or that (b) Christian tradition "shifted the date of the

<sup>1</sup> Ward's *View of the Religion of the Hindoos*, 5th ed. 1863, p. 91.

<sup>2</sup> Cp. Prof. Drews, *The Witnesses to the Historicity of Jesus*, Eng. tr. p. 54 sq., for Niemojewski's theory that Pilate = the constellation Orion, *pilatus*, the javelin-bearer. This theory is not endorsed by Drews.

<sup>3</sup> *P.C.* 137.

<sup>4</sup> *G.B.* ix, 412 sq.

crucifixion by a month or so " to connect it with the Passover. As the official Purim rite, though cognate with that of the Passover, cannot well have been allowed to coincide with it, the theory of coincidence is barred; and the theorist is assured by an expert colleague that "all that we hear of the Passion is only explicable by the Passover festival," and that "without the background of the festival all that we know of the Crucifixion and of what led up to it is totally unintelligible." <sup>1</sup>

When, however, the unhistorical character of the gospel narrative is realized, such difficulties disappear. The *intention* was certainly to connect the Crucifixion with the Passover (in which the paschal lamb—symbolizing Isaac—was customarily dressed in the form of a cross <sup>2</sup>); and in the fourth gospel Jesus becomes an actual Passover sacrifice. But the narrative is simply a reduction to historic form of the procedure of a customary ritual sacrifice, habitual usages of human sacrifice being represented as expedients of a single Roman execution. With the exact seasonal date of the Jesus Barabbas rite which here motivated the gospel legend, the myth-theory is not primarily concerned, though it has secondary interest. It was probably a Spring Festival, and at the same time a New Year Festival, the period of the vernal equinox having been both in east and west the time of the New Year before that was placed after the winter solstice. It is thus highly likely that there were analogous sacrificial festivals at Yule and at Easter, one celebrating the new-birth of the sun and the other the revival of vegetation. The Sacæa festival may or may not have been identical with that known from the monuments to have been called the Zakmuk <sup>3</sup> (New Year):

<sup>1</sup> *G.B.* ix, 415, note.

<sup>2</sup> Justin Martyr, *Dial. with Trypho*, c. 40.

<sup>3</sup> *G.B.* ix, 357 sq.

either way, the features may have been the same. There was in Judea, further, a hieratic year as well as a civil, a Lesser Passover as well as the greater.<sup>1</sup> The myth-theory does not depend on an agreed date, though the myth fixes on an astronomical date, itself constantly varying in the calendar.

What leaps to the eyes is that the gospel legend preserves two separated features of the festival of a Sacrificed Mock-King, which as incidents in the life of the Teacher are wholly incompatible, and which the biographical theory cannot reasonably explain—the acclaimed and welcomed Entry into Jerusalem and within a week the demand of the city multitude for the crucifixion. The Entry is an elaboration of several myth elements, but it contains the item of the acclaimed ride of the quasi-king, mounted on an ass (or two asses). If the biographical school would but consider historical probabilities, they would realize that the story as told cannot be historical, with or without the strange antithesis of the multitude's speedy demand for the prophet's death. Such a triumphal entry, for such a person as the gospel Jesus, could not spontaneously have taken place: it must have been planned; and, if arranged with such an effect as the record describes, it would have given Pilate very sufficient ground for intervention without waiting for a complaint from the priests. Taken as history, it is wholly irreconcilable with the "Crucify him" ascribed to a multitude whose support of Jesus had been affirmed the day before; and accordingly M. Loisy, accepting the Entry, rejects the latter episode. Strauss, hesitating to go, "as has latterly often been done," the length of rejecting the Entry on the ass as wholly mythical, finds it very much so;<sup>2</sup> and Brandt

<sup>1</sup> *P.C.* 146; *G.B.* ix, 359.

<sup>2</sup> *Second Leben Jesu*, § 83.



incidentally dismisses it as "under the strongest suspicion of being framed upon Old Testament motives from beginning to end."<sup>1</sup>

Thus the biographical school itself proffers a myth-theory, without indicating an explanatory motive for the positing of a contradiction. But when we realize that an acclamation of a quasi-king riding on an ass was actually *part of the ritual* in a sacrificial rite in which he *was to be* crucified, the two clashing elements in the legend are at once explained in the full myth-theory. Their separate handling and development was, just as intelligibly, part of the process of gospel-making, the creation of an ideal Jesus. But seeing that in the Sacæa festival the mock-king had a *five days' reign* between his start and his death,<sup>2</sup> the original ritual gave the interval which in the gospel story is filled with the acts of the Teaching God. Five days is the accepted traditional interval from Palm Sunday to Crucifixion Day.

[Even for the item of the two asses in Matthew there is a myth-explanation. Many writers of the biographical school, who compensate themselves for their difficulties by ascribing a peculiarly crass stupidity to the apostles and evangelists at every opportunity, decide that the narrator or interpolator posited the two asses, an ass and its colt, because he found in Zechariah a Messianic prediction so phrased,<sup>3</sup> and did not understand that the Hebraic idiom simply meant "an ass." Yet one member of the school, Dr. Conybeare, fiercely denounces myth-theorists for claiming to understand Jewish symbolism better than the Jews did. Either principle serves the turn. When Tertullian says that Jesus is the Divine Fish because fishes were parthenogenetically born, and Jesus was born again in the waters of the Jordan, Dr.

<sup>1</sup> *Die evang. Geschichte*, p. 156.      <sup>2</sup> *G.B. Pt. III* (vol. iv), 113-114.

<sup>3</sup> "Upon an ass and [even in R.V.] upon a colt, the foal of an ass," Zech. ix, 9. I should explain that in denying that such "tautologies" were normal in the Old Testament I had in view narrative passages.

Conybeare is sure of the wisdom of Tertullian. This thesis, first found in Tertullian, is to decide the question, to the exclusion of any reflection on the fact that the Sun at Easter had before the Christian era passed from the sign Aries to the sign Pisces in the zodiac. But when Matthew reads Zechariah's two asses as meaning two asses, Matthew is to be dismissed as a Jew who did not understand the commonest Hebrew idiom.

The simple fact that the Septuagint does *not* give the duplication, putting only "a young colt," will serve to indicate to any careful reader that the evangelist or interpolator was following the Hebrew, and therefore is to be presumed to have known something of Hebrew idiom. And the just critical inference is that *both* passages had regard to the zodiacal figure of the Two Asses for the sign Cancer, from which we have the myth of Bacchus riding on two asses.<sup>1</sup> Further, it is probable that the similar passage in the Song of Jacob<sup>2</sup> has also a zodiacal basis. These details, which Dr. Conybeare absolutely withholds from his readers, indicate the mythological induction put by the present writer. In an unconstructable sentence, Dr. Conybeare appears to argue<sup>3</sup> that to secure any consideration for such a thesis we must "prove that the earliest Christians, who were Jews, must have been familiar with the rare legend of Bacchus crossing a marsh on two asses," and "with the rare representation of the zodiacal sign Cancer as an ass and its foal."

How the critic knows that the legend was rare at the beginning of the Christian era he does not reveal; any more than he gives his justification for calling the Asses sign rare in the face of the statement of Lactantius that the Greeks call the sign of Cancer "(the) Asses." This reference was given by me, as also the item that the sign of the Ass and Foal is Babylonian. It was thus very likely to be known in the Semitic world. Yet Dr. Conybeare obliviously informs us that "it is next to impossible" that it should be known to "the earliest

<sup>1</sup> C.M. 338-341.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. xlix, 11.

<sup>3</sup> *The Historical Christ*, p. 22.



Christians," when all the while he is arguing that Matthew was not the gospel of "the earliest Christians." It is in perfect keeping with this chaotic procedure that he first oracularly refers me to Hyginus, whose version of the myth of Bacchus and the asses I had actually cited and quoted; and then, discovering that I had done so, yet leaving his written exhortation unaltered, he announces that "by Mr. Robertson's own admission, Bacchus never rode on two asses at all." It is difficult to be sure whether Dr. Conybeare does or does not believe in the historicity of Bacchus, as he does in that of Jesus; but seeing that Lactantius, as cited by me, expressly declares that the two asses (= Cancer) carried Bacchus over the marsh, and that Dr. Conybeare had already recognized that such a myth existed, his absurd conclusion can be set down only to his habitual incoherence.

I have dealt in detail with his futile criticism at this point by way of putting the reader on his guard against the method of bluster. Comparative mythology is a difficult and thorny field, but it has to be explored; and Dr. Conybeare, whose study of the subject seems to have begun in the year of the issue of his book,<sup>1</sup> does not even discern the nature of its problems. He avowedly supposes that totems are Gods; and he argues that the Jewish and Hellenistic world in the age of Augustus was at the mythopœic stage of the Australian aborigines of to-day. Of the phenomena of iconographic myth he is evidently quite ignorant; and his dithyramb on the sun myth tells of nothing but obsolete debate on the question. And it is in this connection that he informs his antagonists, in his now celebrated academic manner, that they are "a back number."

It has only to be added that as regards the documentary problem, in this connection, Dr. Conybeare is equally distracted. It is far from certain that at this point Mark's "colt" is not a "rectification" of an original which Matthew accepted. The assumption—negated by themselves—that Mark and Matthew as we have them

<sup>1</sup> See p. 19, *note*, ref. to M. Durkheim. M. Durkheim is one of the greatest of anthropologists; he is not a mythologist at all.

are both primary forms, Matthew always following and elaborating Mark, is one of the loose hypotheses which such critics when it suits them take for certainties. But the question of priority of form does not affect the fundamental issue. One of the suggestions put by me which Dr. Conybeare has carefully withheld from his readers—if, indeed, he ever really sees what is before him—is that the item of the single ass or colt is probably a myth with another basis. “An ass tied” appears to have been an *Egyptian* symbol pointing to a solar date or a zodiacal or other myth,<sup>1</sup> and this symbol, which is found in the Song of Jacob, is the form put upon the Mark story by Justin Martyr. That the other symbol had a long Christian vogue is indicated first by the fact that there actually exists a Gnostic gem showing an ass suckling its foal, with the figure of the crab (Cancer) above, and the inscription D.N. IHV. XPS., DEI FILIUS = *Dominus Noster Jesu (?) Christus, Son of God*; <sup>2</sup> and, secondly, by the mention of the ass and foal in the third Sermon of St. Proclus (5th c.).<sup>3</sup> These details also Dr. Conybeare withholds from his readers, for the purposes of his polemic.

That we are dealing with a conflict of symbolisms will probably be the inference of those who will face the facts. But Dr. Conybeare, who is here in good company, is quite satisfied that behind the Mark story of Jesus riding in a noisy procession *on an unbroken colt* we have unquestionable history. There must be no nonsense about two asses; but for him the story of the unbroken colt raises no difficulty. He further simplifies the problem by summarizing Mark as telling that “an *insignificant* triumphal demonstration is organized for him [Jesus] as he enters the sacred city on an ass”; <sup>4</sup> and by explaining that “there was no other way of entering Jerusalem unless you went on foot.” <sup>5</sup> The “insignificant” is held to be sufficient to dispose of the problem of the Roman Governor’s entire indifference to a Messianic movement. Thus functions the biographic method, in the hands of our academician.

<sup>1</sup> *C.M.* 340.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* 341.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.* 218, note.

<sup>4</sup> Work cited, p. 14.

<sup>5</sup> *Id.* p. 76.

All the while, the item of the foal is, on his own interpretation, a specified fulfilment of a prophecy, only in this case the prophecy is in his opinion rightly understood, whereas in the two-ass story it was misunderstood. By his own method, the critic is committed to the position that the phrase "whereon no man ever yet sat" is myth.<sup>1</sup> For serious critics in general, this is sufficient to put in doubt the whole story. For our critic, a story of a triumphal procession, with an unbroken colt, is simply resolved into one of an "insignificant procession," with an ordinary donkey. Thus, under the pretence of extracting history from a given document, the document is simply manipulated at will to suit a presupposition. On this plan, the twelve labours of Herakles are simply history exaggerated, and any one can make any Life of Herakles out of it at his pleasure. We must not say that Una rode on a lion, but we may infer that she rode on a small yellow pony. It is the method of the early German deistic rationalists, according to which the story of Jesus walking on the water is saved by the explanation that he was walking on the shore.]

Part of the demonstration of the myth-theory, again, lies in the fact that the first act of Jesus after his entry is to "cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrow the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold the doves." That this should have been accomplished without resistance seemed to Origen so astonishing that he pronounced it among the greatest miracles of Jesus,<sup>2</sup> adding the skeptical comment—"if it really happened." The myth-theory may here claim the support of Origen.

Strauss could find no ground for rejecting the story as myth upon his method of finding myth-motives only in the Old Testament. If he had lived in our day he would probably have agreed that the episode is singled out of

<sup>1</sup> See his *Myth, Magic, and Morals*, 2nd ed. p. 302.

<sup>2</sup> *Comm. in Joh.* x, 16, cited by Strauss. See his first *Life of Jesus*, Pt. II, ch. vii, § 88, for the views of the commentators on the episode.

the kinds of exploit which were permitted to the victim in the *Sacæa* and the *Saturnalia* and such primitive sacrificial festivals in general, and turned to a doctrinal account. Such liberties as are described, all falling short of sacrilege, are among those which could normally take place. It is by way of anti-Judaism that the episode is utilized in the synoptics.

In the fourth gospel, where so many matters are turned to new account, and so much new doctrine introduced, the purification is put with symbolic purpose at the outset of the Messiah's career, in a visit to Jerusalem of which the synoptics know nothing; and in this myth Jesus makes "a scourge of small cords" to effect his purpose. That later item was probably suggested by the effigy of the Egyptian Saviour God Osiris, who bears a scourge as the God of retribution. In the synoptics there is no symbol: the story is simply employed as part of the superadded didactic machinery which alternately exhibits the full development of the Messiah and the unfitness of the "Jewish dispensation" to continue. Inferribly, the story of the fig-tree is in the same case, signifying the condemnation of the Jewish cult, though here there may be a concrete motive of which we have lost the clue. But it is significant that while the gospel record could not possibly assign to the holy Messiah such a general course as was followed by the licensed sacrificial victim, it follows the story of his Entry with that of one markedly disorderly act; whereafter he goes to lodge in Bethany (Mt. xxi, 17) at a house which later is indicated as that of a leper (xxvi, 6). There his head is anointed by a woman; who in Luke, in a differently placed episode (vii, 37), becomes "a sinner." Is not this another echo from the obscure tragedy of the sacrificial victim, who was anointed for his doom?

§ 4. *The Mock-King Ritual*

Separately considered, the Crucifixion in the gospel story is as impossible as the Entry. The cross, we are told, was headed with an inscription: "This is the King of the Jews." Sir J. G. Frazer<sup>1</sup> and M. Salomon Reinach<sup>2</sup> concur in recognizing that if the victim had really been executed on the charge of making such a claim, no Roman governor would have dared so to endorse it.<sup>3</sup> The argument is that only by turning the execution into a celebration of a popular rite could the procedure have been made officially acceptable. But to extract such an explanation from the record is simply to stultify it as such. *If* there really occurred such a manipulation of the death-scene of an adored Teacher, how could the narrators possibly fail to say as much? We are asked by the biographical school to believe that the Crucifixion was made a farce-tragedy by treating the Teacher as the victim in a well-known rite of human sacrifice, and also to believe that the devotees who preserved the record, knowing this fact, chose to say nothing about it, preferring to represent the procedure as a unique incident.

It might perhaps be argued, on the biographical view, that the Roman soldiers, who are held to have been Asiatics, chose to improvise a version of a sacrificial rite which was *unknown* to the Jesuists, and that the latter simply reported the episode without understanding it, interpreting it from their prophets in their own way. But if the record be historical it is incredible that in a cult which is claimed to have made many adherents throughout the Roman Empire in east and west in a

<sup>1</sup> *G.B.* ix, 417.

<sup>2</sup> *Cultes, mythes, et religions*, i, 338.

<sup>3</sup> In John, the high priest is actually made to remonstrate from a Jewish point of view, by way of enforcing the Christian conclusion.



generation or two, it should not quickly have become known that the procedure of the Crucifixion was a copy of popular eastern and western rites of human sacrifice. If there had taken place what the hypothesis suggests, there was a purposive suppression. That is to say, the credibility of the narrative is at this point vitally impeached by a supporter of the biographical theory, which expressly rests on the narrative as regards non-miraculous data.

And while on the one hand it is in effect charged with the gravest *suppressio veri*, on the other it is charged, equally in the name of the biographical view, with something more than *suggestio falsi*, with absolute fiction. M. Loisy does not merely dismiss the Barabbas story as unhistorical, offering no explanation of its strange presence : he comes critically to the conclusion that Jesus on the cross uttered no word, whether of despair, entreaty, or resignation. We need not ask what kind of credit M. Loisy can ask for a record which he thus so gravely discredits. The scientific question is, Upon what grounds can he demur to the extension of a myth-theory to which he thus contributes ? If the record admittedly invented utterances for the Teacher on the cross, why should not the whole be an invention ? In particular, why should not the trial before Pilate and the inscription on the cross be inventions ?

The inscription on the cross, we see, is for the great anthropologist of the school impossible save as part of a simulated ritual. M. Loisy, supporting the same general thesis, declares that "to say Jesus was not condemned to death as king of the Jews, that is to say, as Messiah, on his own avowal, amounts to saying [*autant vaut soutenir*] that he never existed." <sup>1</sup> It is even so ; and

<sup>1</sup> *Jésus et la tradition*, p. 76.

the supporter of the myth-theory is thus doubly justified. The loyal induction is, not that in any rite of human sacrifice exactly such a label was affixed to the gibbet, but that probably some label was, and that the gospel framers (or one of them) "invented" a label which stated their claim for Jesus as Messiah. It was a fairly skilful thing to do, representing the label as a Roman mockery, and thereby making it an appeal to every Jew.<sup>1</sup> It is indeed conceivable that Roman soldiers taking part, once in a way, in the rite of Jesus Barabbas, may have turned that to a purpose of contempt by labelling the poor mock-king as the king of the Jews. But such an episode would not be the enactment of the scene described in the record. It would merely be a hint for it, the acceptance of which was but an additional item of fiction.

That the Crucifixion, as described, is a normal act of ritual human sacrifice, is even more true than it is shown to be by the parallels of the *Sacæa* and the *Saturnalia*. The scourging, the royal robe, the mock crown, were all parts of those rituals, which thus conform in parody to the ritual of the mythic sacrifice of *Ieoud*, son of *Kronos*, probably parodied in the ritual for the victim sacrificed to *Kronos* at *Rhodes*. But so are the drink of wine and myrrh, the leg-breaking, and the piercing with the spear. The crown is a feature of all ancient sacrifice, in all parts of the world. Crowns of flowers were normal in the case of human victims, in *India*, in *Mexico*, in *Greece*, and among the *North-American Indians*, as in ordinary animal sacrifice among the *Greeks*, *Romans*, and *Semites*. But even the crown of thorns had a special religious vogue in *Egypt*, procured as such crowns were

<sup>1</sup> There might be involved, again, a reminiscence of the crucifixion of the last independent king of the Jews, *Antigonus*, by *Mark Antony*. *C.M.* 364.



from thorn-trees near Abydos whose branches curled into garland-form. Prometheus the Saviour, too, receives from Zeus a crown of osiers; and his worshippers wore crowns in his honour.<sup>1</sup> Either some such special motive or the common practice in the popular rite will account for the record.

And these items of the mock-king ritual exclude the argument which might possibly be brought from the fact that in the ancient world, as among primitives in general, all executions, as such, tend to assume the sacrificial form. The condemned criminal is "devoted," *sacer*, taboo, even as is the simply sacrificed victim, becoming the appanage of the God as is the God's representative who is sacrificed *to* the God.<sup>2</sup> It might therefore be argued that a man condemned on purely political grounds could be treated as a sacrificial victim. But there is no instance of the criminal executed *as such* being treated as the mock-king. A criminal might be turned to that account, but that would be by special arrangement: executed simply as a criminal, he would not be crowned and royally robed. These details were features of specific sacrifices: executions were only generically sacrificial, and were of course in no way honorary. In the gospel story, the two thieves are neither mocked, robed, nor crowned. They are not "Sons of the Father," or deputies of the King.

### § 5. *Doctrinal Additions*

The question here arises, however, whether the triple execution was a customary rite. All executions being, as aforesaid, quasi-sacrificial, an ordinary execution

<sup>1</sup> *C.M.* 365.

<sup>2</sup> *P.C.* 130 *sq.*, 363. Cp. Robertson Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, p. 391; Greenidge, *Roman Public Life*, p. 55, citing Pliny, *H.N.* xviii, iii, 12.

might conceivably be combined with a specific sacrifice. It is to be observed that no mention of the triple execution occurs outside of the gospels: the Acts and the Epistles have no allusion to it. It is thus conceivably, as was hinted by Strauss, a late addition to the myth, motivated by the verse now omitted as spurious from Mark (xv, 28), but preserved in Luke (xxii, 37): "And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, And he was reckoned with transgressors." But we are bound to consider the possibility that the triple execution was ritually primordial.

The story of such an execution in the "Acts of Saint Hitzibouzit," martyred at some time in Persia, is evidently doubtful evidence for the practice, as Sir J. G. Frazer observes. The record runs that the saint was "offered up as a sacrifice between two malefactors on a hill top opposite the sun and before all the multitude,"<sup>1</sup> suggesting that the sacrifice was a solar one. This is possible; but martyrology is dubious testimony. On the other hand Mr. W. R. Paton has suggested that the triple execution was a Persian practice, and was made to a triple God.<sup>2</sup> There is the notable support of the statement in a fragment of Ctesias (36) that the Egyptian usurper Inarus was crucified by Artaxerxes the First between two thieves. In addition to the cases of Greek sacrifices of three victims may be noted one among the Dravidians of Jeypore;<sup>3</sup> and the practice among the Khonds of placing the victim between two shrubs. In the Jeypore case one victim was sacrificed at the east, one at the west, and one at the centre of a village; and in another case two victims were sacrificed every third year. A triple execution might be a special event, in which two

<sup>1</sup> *Apology and Acts of Apollonius, etc.*, ed. by F. C. Conybeare, 1894, p. 270. Here Dr. Conybeare momentarily appears as a myth-theorist.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* p. 258.

<sup>3</sup> *P.C.* 115.

victims were both actually and ritually criminals, in order to enhance the divinity of the third. And we know that triple sacrifices did occur. The throwing of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego into the fiery furnace was ostensibly a triple sacrifice: it will hardly be claimed as a historical episode in its subsisting form.

On a careful balance, however, the presumption seems rather against a triple rite. What is quite clear is that for the early Jesuists the "prophecy" in 53rd Isaiah possessed the highest importance. For us, that lyric chapter is still somewhat enigmatic. Gunkel, who is here followed by Professor Drews,<sup>1</sup> takes the view that the suffering figure described is really that of the typical victim of the human sacrifice; and it certainly fits that conception at points where it does not easily compose with that of the figure of oppressed Israel.<sup>2</sup> The victim *was* "wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities"; and conceptually "with his stripes we are healed." On the other hand, who were "we" for "Isaiah" if not Israel itself? The only interpretation seems to be that the past generations had suffered for the present; and this does not yield an intellectually satisfying figure. But still more improbable, on the whole, is the suggestion that the Hebrew prophet or quasi-prophetic lyrist—whatever date we may assign to the chapter—has really perceived and figured the tragic vision of the sacrificial victim as he is here supposed to have done. It would be a psychological feat extremely remarkable even for that highly gifted writer;<sup>3</sup> and moreover it would finally compose still less with the general

<sup>1</sup> *The Christ Myth*, Eng. trans. pp. 65-68.

<sup>2</sup> Cp. Cheyne, *Introd. to Isaiah*, 1895, pp. 304-5, as to Ewald's theory that Jeremiah may have been meant.

<sup>3</sup> So to be estimated whether he be "the" Deutero-Isaiah or a song-writer whose work has been incorporated. Cp. Cheyne, as cited, and his art. ISAIAH in *Encyc. Bib.*

idea of the context than does the supposed presentment of the suffering People. It is difficult to reach any satisfying notion of Isaiah's general meaning on the view of Gunkel and Drews.

We are thus far held, then, to the inference that, as Isaiah's chapter was certainly taken by the early Christists <sup>1</sup> who had adopted the Messianic idea to be a prophecy of their Messiah, the Christ myth was shaped in accordance with it. There are three main strands in the Christ myth, the Jesuist, the Christist or Messianic, and that of the Teaching God. The "suffering" motive serves to bind the three together; and the concrete item, "he was numbered with the transgressors," bracketed as it is with "he poured out his soul unto death," gives a very definite ground for the item of the forced companionship of the malefactors in the Crucifixion scene. It is, in short, apparently one of the specifically Judaic motives in the myth construction. Earlier in the narrative the Messiah is frequently grouped with "publicans and sinners": he comes "eating and drinking," in contrast with the ascetic figure of the Baptist. That feature is probably part of the atmosphere of the myth-motive of the sacrificial victim, with the leper-host and the anointing by the "sinner." But the "two thieves" are inferribly supplied from another side.

In the first two gospels, the character of the unnamed anointress is tacitly suggested by the very reticence of the description, "a woman." In Jewry and in the East

<sup>1</sup> The terms "Christists" and "Jesuists" are, it need hardly be said, used for the sake of exactitude. The term "early Christians" would often convey a different and misleading idea. There were Jesuists and Christists before the "Christian" movement arose. Dr. Conybeare pronounces such terms "jargon" (*Histor. Christ.*, p. 94). In the next line he illustrates the delicacy of his own academic taste by the terms "tag-rag and bobtail." Such slang abounds in his book, and this particular phrase recurs (p. 183).

generally, the woman who went freely into men's houses was declassed; and the "sinner" of Luke was only a specification of the already hinted. But the story in Luke of the homage of the good thief is clearly new myth, coming of the widened ethic of the "gospel of the Gentiles." Matthew and Mark have no thought of anything but the association of the Messiah with typical transgressors in death: for them the two thieves are hostile. The "Gentile" gospel improves the occasion by converting one of the transgressors. No critical inquirer, presumably, now fails to see doctrinal myth at the second stage. It is only the atmosphere of pre-supposition that can keep it imperceptible in the first. In the making of the gospels, ritual myth, doctrinal myth, and traditional myth are co-factors; and it may be that even where doctrinal myth is quite clearly at work, as in the staging of the Messianic death "with transgressors," an actual ritual is also commemorated.

#### § 6. *Minor Ritual and Myth Elements*

In the later myth the robbers, as it happens, are made to embody certain features of sacrificial ritual. We are told in the fourth gospel that the Jews "asked of Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away,"—"that the bodies should not remain on the cross upon the sabbath, for the day of that sabbath was a high day." Accordingly the soldiers break the legs of the two thieves, "but when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs." The implication is that the men's legs were to be broken by way of killing them—a patently untrue suggestion.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to note that in the *Gospel of Peter* one of the male-factors is represented as speaking to the Jews in defence of Jesus, whereupon they break his legs in vengeance.



The spear-thrust which "howbeit" was given to Jesus would have been the way of killing the others if they were alive: breaking the legs was a brutality which would not ensure death.

The explanation is that both leg-breaking and spearing were features of sacrificial rites. It may have been by way of purposive contrast to the former procedure that in the priestly ritual <sup>1</sup> of the passover it is enacted that no bone of the (unspecified) victim shall be broken. The breaking of the leg-bones in human sacrifice was one of the horrible expedients of the primitive world for securing the apparent willingness of the victim: it is to be found alike in Dravidian and in African sacrifice.<sup>2</sup> An alternative method, which tended to supersede the other, was that of drugging or intoxication, of which we find still more widespread evidence. In ancient Jerusalem, we find the practice transferred to ordinary execution on the cross, the humane women making a practice of giving a narcotic potion of wine and incense to the victim.<sup>3</sup> Thus associated with the deaths of ordinary criminals, it suggested to some of the Jesuist myth-makers a ground for specializing the record.

In the first two gospels, a drink is offered to Jesus on the cross—wine <sup>4</sup> mingled with gall, in Matthew; wine mingled with myrrh in Mark—"but he received it not"; this, in Matthew, after tasting. The Marcan form is probably the first, as it describes the customary narcotic: the idea is to indicate that in the case of the divine victim no artifice was needed to secure an apparent acquiescence: he was a voluntary sufferer. "Gall," in Matthew, may

<sup>1</sup> Ex. xii, 46; Num. ix, 12. Cp. Ps. xxxiv, 20.

<sup>2</sup> P.C. 113, 155.

<sup>3</sup> *Granum turis in poculo vini, ut alienetur mens ejus.* Talmud, tract. Sanhedrin.

<sup>4</sup> Vinegar in the Alexandrian Codex.



have reference to pagan mysteries in which a drink of gall figured.<sup>1</sup> In Luke, vinegar is ostensibly offered as part of the derision. In John, no drink is mentioned till the end, when the dying victim says, "I thirst." Having partaken of "a sponge full of the vinegar upon hyssop," he says, "It is finished," and dies. In Matthew, this act of compassion takes a simpler form, the sponge of vinegar being given on the utterance of the despairing cry, while other bystanders jeer: in Mark, the giver of the sponge also jeers.

It is needless to debate long over the priorities of such details: as regards the drink of vinegar, all alike have regard to Psalm lxix, 21: "They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." For that reason, the wine-and-myrrh item is probably primordial: it tells of the sacrificial rite; and the drink of vinegar is a doctrinal addition; even as the rejection of the narcotic is doctrinal. For the variations which distinguish each narrative from the others, there is no reasonable explanation on the biographical view: if devoted onlookers could not preserve the truth at such a point, where could they be trusted? The mythical interpretation alone makes all intelligible.

The fourth gospel, with its tale of the leg-breaking, supplies the strongest ground for surmising the occasional occurrence of a triple rite, in which the lesser victims were treated as sacrificed slaves normally have been in African and other human sacrifice, while the central victim was put on another footing. The express enactment in regard to the mysterious paschal sacrifice suggests that bone-breaking took place in others. In all likelihood, the original paschal sacrifice was that of a human victim of specially high grade: the substitution of the lamb

<sup>1</sup> C.M. 367.

was part of the process of civilization indicated in the myth of Abraham and Isaac. And if the knowledge of the death-rite of Jesus Barabbas could subsist in the first century or later, knowledge of an early triple rite could subsist also. But this remains open to doubt, though at several points the fourth gospel specially emphasizes the historical derivation of the cult from a sacrament of blood sacrifice.

Nowhere else is the literal basis of the symbol of "body and blood" so insisted upon. Its writers had present to their minds an actual ritual in which the eating of the body of a Sacrificed God, first actually, then symbolically, was of cardinal importance. The later myth puts new stress on the conception, as if it had been felt that the earlier was not sufficiently explicit; and it makes the Jewish high-priest lay down the doctrine of human sacrifice from the Judaic side.<sup>1</sup> It is in this atmosphere of sacrificial ideas that we get the item of the piercing of the divine victim with a spear. The detail is turned specially to the account of the Johannine doctrine of resurrection by putting what passed in popular physiology for a certain proof of death—the issuing of "blood and water."<sup>2</sup> But here again we find both a Hebrew motive<sup>3</sup> and a pagan motive for the detail. In the sacrifice of the sacred slave of the Moon-Goddess among the primitive Albanians, the victim was allowed the customary year of luxury and licence, and was finally anointed and slain by being pierced to the heart with a sacred lance through the side. And there are other eastern analogues.<sup>4</sup>

It is the fourth gospel, finally, that introduces the "garment without seam," combining a Hebraic with a

<sup>1</sup> John xi, 50.

<sup>2</sup> See the whole question minutely discussed in Strauss, Pt. III, ch. iv, § 134.

<sup>3</sup> Zech. xii, 10.

<sup>4</sup> *P.C.* 125-6.

pagan motive. In order to fulfil a "prophecy" held to be Messianic,<sup>1</sup> the synoptics make the soldiers cast lots for the garments of Jesus. The fourth gospel specifies a simple allotment of the garments in general, as if they could have been numerous enough to go round the soldiery, but limits the act of "casting lots" to the *chiton*, the under garment. Thus the soldiers both "divide the raiment" and cast lots for the "vesture." The making of this "without seam" is at once an assimilation of Jesus to the high-priest and an assimilation of the Slain God to the Sun-God and other deities.<sup>2</sup> A special *chiton* was woven for Apollo in Sparta; as a *peplos* or shawl was woven for Hêrê at Elis. And this in turn had for the pre-Christian pagans mystic meanings as symbolizing the indivisible solar robe of universal light, ascribed to Osiris; the partless robe of Ahura Mazda; Pan's coat of many colours, and yet other notions. Always the story is itemized in terms of myth, of ritual, of symbol, of doctrine, never in terms of real biography.

### § 7. *The Cross*

It is not at all certain, and it is not probable, that in the earlier stages of the myth the cross as such was prominent. Early crucifixion was not always a nailing of outstretched hands in the cross form, but often a hanging of the victim by the arms, tied together at the wrists, with or without a support to the body at the thighs.<sup>3</sup> The *stauros* was not necessarily a cross: it might be a simple pile or stake. In the Book of Acts (v, 30) Peter and the Apostles are made to speak of Jesus "whom ye slew, hanging him on a tree." This

<sup>1</sup> Ps. xxii, 18. The citation in Mt. xxvii, 35 (omitted in R.V.) is a late interpolation, found in the Codex Sangallensis.

<sup>2</sup> C.M. 380.

<sup>3</sup> C.M. 364.

was in itself a common sacrificial mode; and all sacrificial traditions are more or less represented in the New Testament compilation.

But there was an irresistible compulsion to a divinizing of the cross as of the victim. Ages before the Christian era the symbol had been mystic and sacrosanct for Semites, for Egyptians, for Greeks, for Hindus; and the Sacred Tree of the cults of Attis, Dionysos, and Osiris lent itself alike to many symbolic significances.<sup>1</sup> The cross had reference to the equinox, when the sacred tree was cut down; to the victim bound to it; to the four points of the compass; to the zodiacal sign Aries, thus connected with the sacrificial lamb;<sup>2</sup> and to the universe as symbolized in the "orb" of the emperor, with the cross-lines drawn on it. The final Christian significance of the cross is a composite of ideas associated with it everywhere, from Mexico to the Gold Coast, in both of which regions it was or is a symbol of the Rain-God.<sup>3</sup> The Dravidian victim, the deified sacrifice, was as-it-were crucified;<sup>4</sup> as was a victim in a Batak sacrifice, where, as on the Gold Coast, the St. Andrew's-cross form is enacted.<sup>5</sup> The commonness of some such procedure in African sacrificial practice points to its general antiquity.

It would appear, too, that in the mysteries of the Saviour Gods not only a crucified aspect of the God but a simulation of that on the part of the devotees was customary. Osiris was actually represented in crucifix form;<sup>6</sup> and in the ritual the worshipper became "one with Osiris," apparently by being "joined unto the

<sup>1</sup> *C.M.* 369 sq.; *P.C.* 150 sq.      <sup>2</sup> *P.C.* 319.      <sup>3</sup> *P.C.* 151, 368, note.

<sup>4</sup> *P.C.* 113, top. The preceding hypothesis with regard to the Meriah post is an error. Mr. H. G. Wood informs me he has learned from the Museum authorities at Madras that the apparent cross-bar was really a projection, representing the head of an elephant, to the trunk of which the victim was tied.

<sup>5</sup> *P.C.* App. A.

<sup>6</sup> *C.M.* 376.

sycamore tree.”<sup>1</sup> When, then, in the Epistle to the Galatians<sup>2</sup> we find “Paul” addressing the converts as “those before whose eyes Jesus Christ was openly set forth (προεγράφη) crucified,” and declaring of himself:<sup>3</sup> “I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus,” we are at once pointed to the Syrian practice of *stigmata*, which appears to connect with both Osirian and Christian usage. In his remarkable account of the life of the sacred city of Hierapolis—a microcosm of eastern paganism—Lucian, after telling how children are sacrificed with the votive pretence that they are oxen, records that it is the universal practice to make punctures in the neck or in the hands, and that “all” Syrians bear such *stigmata*.<sup>4</sup> One of the principal cults of the place was that of Attis, the castrated God of Vegetation, in whose mysteries the image of a youth was bound to a tree,<sup>5</sup> with a ritual of suffering, mourning, resurrection and rejoicing. As Dionysos was also “he of the tree,” it is not improbable that he, who also died to rise again, may have been similarly adored. On the other hand, the representation of the Saviour Prometheus suffering in a crucified posture tells of an immemorial concept.<sup>6</sup>

For the Jews, finally, the cross symbol was already mystically potent, being a mark of salvation in connection with the massacre-sacrifice of the Passover, and by consequence salvatory in times of similar danger.<sup>7</sup> When with this was combined the mystic significance of the sign in Platonic lore as pointing to the Logos,<sup>8</sup> the mythic foundation for Christism was of the broadest. The crucifix is late in Christian art; but the wayside cross is as old as the cult of Hermes, God of boundaries.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *P.C.* 196.<sup>4</sup> *De Dea Syria*, 59.<sup>7</sup> *P.C.* 157.<sup>2</sup> *Gal.* iii, 1.<sup>5</sup> *C.M.* 373.<sup>6</sup> *C.M.* 375.<sup>3</sup> vi, 17.<sup>8</sup> *P.C.* 371.<sup>9</sup> *Id.* 377.



§ 8. *The Suffering Messiah*

By way of accounting for the Jewish refusal to see in Jesus the promised Messiah, orthodox exegesis has spread widely the belief that it was no part of the Messianic idea that the Anointed One should die an ignominious death; and some of us began by accepting that account of the case. Clearly it was not the traditional or generally prevailing Jewish expectation. Yet in the Acts we find Peter and Paul alike (iii, 18; xvii, 3; xxvi, 23) made to affirm that the prophets in general predicted that Christ should suffer; and in Luke (xxiv, 26-27, 44-46) the same assertion is put in the mouth of Jesus. Either then the exegetes regard these assertions as unfounded or they admit that one school of interpretation in Jewry found a number of "prophetical" passages which foretold the Messiah's exemplary death. And the A.V. margin refers us to Ps. xxii; Isa. l, 6; liii, 5, etc.; Dan. ix, 26.

Now, these are adequate though not numerous documentary grounds for the doctrine, on Jewish principles of interpretation. Jewish, indeed, the Messianic idea is not in origin: it is Perso-Babylonian;<sup>1</sup> and the idea of a suffering or re-arising Messiah may well have come in from that side. But equally that may have found some Jewish acceptance. We can see very well that in Daniel "the Anointed One"—that is, "the Messiah" and "the Christ"—refers to the Maccabean hero; but that as well as the other passages, on Jewish principles, could apply to the Messiah of any period; and the Septuagint reading of Psalm xxii, 16: "They pierced my hands and my feet," was a specification of crucifixion. It is not impossible that that reading was the result of the actual crucifixion of Cyrus, who had been specified as a "Christ"

<sup>1</sup> *P.C.* 166. Cp. Drews, *Christ Myth*, 42.



in Isaiah. We have nothing to do here with rational interpretation: the whole conception of prophecy is irrational; but the construing of old texts as prophecies was a Jewish specialty.

When then a theistic rationalist of the last generation wrote of the gospel Jesus:—

His being a carpenter, occupying the field of barbaric Galilee, and suffering death as a culprit, are not features which the constructor of an imaginary tale would go out of his way to introduce wherewith to associate his hero, and therefore, probably, we have here real facts presented to us,<sup>1</sup>

he was far astray. Anything might be predicated of a Jewish Messiah. Not only had the Messianic Cyrus been crucified: the anointed and triumphant Judas Maccabæus, under whose auspices the Messianic belief had revived in Israel in the second century B.C., had finally fallen in battle; and his brother Simon, who was actually regarded as the Messiah, was murdered by his son-in-law.<sup>2</sup>

It is not here argued that the Messianic idea had been originally connected with the Jesus cult; on the contrary that cult is presented as a non-national one, surviving in parts of Palestine in connection with belief in an ancient deity and the practice of an ancient rite, in a different religious atmosphere from that of Messianism. The solution to which we shall find ourselves led is that at a certain stage the Messianic idea was grafted on the cultus; and this stage is likely to have begun after the fall of Jerusalem, when for most Jews the hope of a Maccabean recovery was buried. Then it was that the

<sup>1</sup> Judge T. L. Strange, *Contributions*, etc., 1881: "The Portraiture and Mission of Jesus," p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Cp. Charles, introd. to *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, 1908, p. xvi, as to John Hyrcanus.

idea of a Messiah "from above,"<sup>1</sup> supernaturally empowered to make an end of the earthly scene, became the only plausible one; and here the conception of a Slain God who, like all slain Gods, rose again, invited the development. Jesuists could now make a new appeal to Jews in general upon recognizably Jewish lines. They were of course resisted, even as Sadducees were resisted by Pharisees, and *vice versa*. The statement in the MESSIAH article in the *Encyclopædia Biblica* that it is highly improbable that "the Jews" at the time of Christ believed in a suffering and atoning Messiah is nugatory. No one ever put such a proposition. But "the Jews" had in course of time added much to their creed, and might have added this, were it not that the Jesus cult became identified with Gentile and anti-Judaic propaganda.

In any case the idea arose among Jews, and quite intelligibly. The picture drawn by Isaiah was a standing incitement to the rise of a cult whose Hero-God had been slain. It was the one kind of Messianic cult which the Romans would leave unmolested. At the same time it committed the devotees to the position that the Messiah must come *again*, "in the clouds, in great glory"; and the Christian Church was actually established on that conception, which sufficed to sustain it till the earthly Providence of the State came to the rescue. Some of its modern adherents have not hesitated to boast that the common expectation of the speedy end of the world gave the infant Church a footing not otherwise obtainable. It was certainly a *conditio sine qua non* for Christianity in its infancy.

As for the item of "the carpenter," we have seen<sup>2</sup> not

<sup>1</sup> Cp. Charles, *The Apocalypse of Baruch*, 1896, pp. 52-53, *notes*. The Messiah, in the view there discussed, was to have been "concealed"—another cue for the evangelists.

<sup>2</sup> *H.J.* 153 *sq.*

only that that is mythic, but that the myth-theory alone can account for it.

### § 9. *The Rock Tomb*

In the first gospel (xxvii, 57 sq.) we have a comparatively simple version of the story of Joseph of Arimathea, a rich disciple of Jesus, who gets the dead body of the crucified, wraps it in clean linen, and lays it "in his own new tomb, which he had hewed out in the rock." In Mark and Luke we have visibly elaborated accounts, in which, however, while the rock tomb is specified, it is not described as Joseph's "own," though it is represented as hitherto unused. Such a narrative points very directly to the Mithraic rite in which the stone image of the dead God, after being ritually mourned over, is laid in a tomb, which, Mithra being "the God out of the rock," would naturally be of stone—a simple matter in a cult whose chief rites were always enacted in a cave.<sup>1</sup> Details thus thrown into special prominence, while in themselves historically insignificant, can be understood only as mythically motivated. So noticeable is the Mithraic parallel that the Christian Father who angrily records it exclaims, *Habet ergo diabolus Christos suos*—"the devil thus has his Christs." In Mithraism the rock tomb, which is an item in a ritual of death and resurrection, is mythically motivated throughout: in the gospel story, historically considered, the item is meaningless.

Obvious as is the mythological inference, it is met by the assertion that round Jerusalem "soil was so scarce that every one was buried in a rock tomb."<sup>2</sup> Such a criticism at once defeats itself. If every one was buried in a rock tomb, what was the point of the emphasised

<sup>1</sup> *P.C.* 304-6, 316-18; *C.M.* 331 and *note*.

<sup>2</sup> Conybeare, *Historical Christ*, p. 19.

detail in the gospels, which are so devoid of details of a really biographical character? Obviously, rock tombs were the specialty of the rich; and Joseph of Arimathea is described in all the synoptics as a man of social standing. Is the motive of the story nothing better than the desire to record that Jesus was richly buried?

"Scores of such tombs remain," cries the critic: "were they all Mithraic?" The argument thus evaded is that there was *no* real tomb. If there was one thing which the early Jesuists, on the biographical theory, might be supposed to keep hold of, it was the place of their Lord's sepulchre; yet nothing subsists but an admittedly false tradition. At Jerusalem, as one has put it, there are shown "two Zions, two Temple areas, two Bethanys, two Gethsemanes, two or more Calvarys, three Holy Sepulchres, several Bethesdas."<sup>1</sup> It is all myth. "There is not a single existing site in the Holy City that is mentioned in connection with Christian history before the year 326 A.D., when Constantine's mother adored the two footprints of Christ on Olivet."<sup>2</sup> She was shown nothing else.<sup>3</sup> "The position of the traditional sites of Calvary and the Holy Sepulchre, in the middle of the north quarter of Jerusalem, seems to have given rise to suspicions very early."<sup>4</sup> It well might. I have known a modern traveller who, on seeing the juxtaposed sites, at once realized that he was on the scene, if of anything, of an ancient ritual, not of events such as are narrated in the gospels. The traditional Golgotha is only fifty or sixty yards away from the Sepulchre;<sup>5</sup> and near by is "Mount Moriah," upon

<sup>1</sup> Col. Conder, *The City of Jerusalem*, 1909, p. 3, citing Rix.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* p. 9.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.* p. 10; Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, iii, 42.

<sup>4</sup> Conder, p. 13.

<sup>5</sup> Walter Menzies, *Notes of a Holiday Excursion*, 1897, p. 89.

which Abraham is recorded to have sought to sacrifice Isaac.

Colonel Conder, who accepts without misgiving all four gospel narratives, and attempts to combine them, avows that the "Garden Tomb" chosen by General Gordon, in the latterly selected Calvary, is impossible, being probably a work of the twelfth century;<sup>1</sup> and for his own part, while inclined to stand by the new Golgotha, avows that "we must still say of our Lord as was said of Moses, 'No man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day.'"<sup>2</sup> Placidly he concludes that "it is well that we should not know."<sup>3</sup> But what does the biographical theory make of such a conclusion? Its fundamental assumption is that of Renan, that the personality of Jesus was so commanding as to make his disciples imagine his resurrection. In elaborate and contradictory detail we have the legends of that; and yet we find that all trace of knowledge alike of place of crucifixion and tomb had vanished from the Christian community which is alleged to have arisen immediately after his ascension. The theory collapses at a touch, here as at every other point. There is no more a real Sepulchre of Jesus than there is a real Sepulchre of Mithra; and the bluster which offers the solution that at Jerusalem every one was buried in a rock tomb is a mere closing of the eyes to the monumental fact of the myth.

The critic is all the while himself committed to the denial that there was any tomb. Professing to follow the suggestion<sup>4</sup> of M. Loisy that Jesus was thrown into "some common foss," which in his hands becomes "*the common pit reserved for crucified malefactors*," he affirms<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Work cited, pp. 154-5.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* p. 156.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.* p. 140.

<sup>4</sup> "Il est à supposer," are M. Loisy's words. *Jésus et la trad. évang.*, p. 107.

<sup>5</sup> *Myth, Magic, and Morals*, 2nd edit. p. 297.



that "the words ascribed in Acts xiii, 29, to Paul certainly favour the Abbé's view." They certainly do not. The text in question runs :

And when they had fulfilled all things that were written of him they took him down *from the tree*, and *laid him in a tomb*.

The Greek word is *μνημεῖον*—that used in the gospel story. There is thus no support whatever either for the suggestion of "a common foss" or for the allegation about "the common pit reserved for crucified malefactors"—a wholly unwarranted figment. The second "they" of the sentence is indefinite : it may mean either the Jews of the previous sentence or another "they" : but either way it expressly posits a tomb. Yet after this deliberate perversion of the document, which of course he does not quote, the critic proceeds (p. 302) to aver that "*the genuine tradition of Jesus having been cast by his enemies into the common pit reserved for malefactors . . . survived among the Jews*"; and that the tomb story was invented as "the most effective way of meeting" the imagined statement. Such an amateur inventor of myth is naturally resentful of mythological tests !

### § 10. *The Resurrection*

If a suffering Messiah was arguable for the Jews, his resurrection after death was a matter of course. The biographical theory, that the greatness of the Founder's personality led his followers to believe that he *must* rise again, is historically as unwarrantable as any part of the biographical case. The death and resurrection of the Saviour-God was an outstanding feature of all the most popular cults of the near East ; Osiris, Herakles, Dionysos, Attis, Adonis, Mithra, all died to rise again ; and a ritual



of burial, mourning, resurrection, and rejoicing was common to several. On any view such rituals were established in other contemporary cults ; and it is this fact that makes it worth while in this inquiry to glance at a myth which is now abandoned by all save the traditionally orthodox.

On the uncritical assumption that nothing but pure Judaism could exist in Jewry in the age of the Herods, the notion of a dying and re-aring Hero-God was impossible among Jews save as a result of a stroke of new constructive faith. That simple negative position ignores not only the commonness of the belief in immortality among Jews (the Pharisees all held it) before the Christian era, but the special Jewish beliefs in the "translation" of Moses and Elijah, and the story of Saul, the witch of Endor, and the spirit of Samuel. The very belief that the risen Elias was to be the forerunner of the Messiah was a lead to the belief that the Messiah himself might come after a resurrection.

But it is practically certain that a liturgical resurrection was or had been *practised* in contemporary cults which had at one time enacted an annual sacrifice of the representative of the God, abstracted in myth as the death of the God himself. And in our own time the survival of an analogous practice has been noted in India. At the installation of the Rajahs of Keonjhar it was anciently the practice for the Rajah to slay a victim : latterly there is a mock-slaying, whereupon the mock-victim disappears. "He must not be seen for three days ; then he presents himself to the Rajah as miraculously restored to life." <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *G.B.* iv, 56. Cp. 154.

## CHAPTER III

### ROOTS OF THE MYTH

#### § 1. *Historical Data*

It does not follow from the proved existence of mystery-dramas in pagan cults in the Roman empire in the first century, C.E., that the Jesuists had a similar usage; but when we find in the New Testament an express reference to such parallelism, and in the early Fathers a knowledge that such parallels were drawn, we are entitled to ask whether there is not further evidence. When "Paul"<sup>1</sup> tells his adherents: "Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of daimons:<sup>2</sup> ye cannot partake of the table of the Lord and of the table of daimons," he is complaining that some converts are wont to partake indifferently of the pagan and Christian sacraments. Few students now, probably, will assent to the view that the "tables of daimons," with their similar rites, were sudden imitations of the Christian sacraments. They were of old standing. But the Jesuist rite also was in all likelihood much older, in some form, than the Christian era.

If there is any principle of comparative mythology that might fairly have been claimed as generally accepted by

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. x, 21. I say "Paul" as I say "Matthew" or "John," for brevity's sake, not at all as accepting the ascriptions of the books. Van Manen's thesis that all the Epistles of "Paul" are pseudepigraphic is probably very near the truth.

<sup>2</sup> The retention of "devils" in the Revised Version, with "Gr. *demons*" only in the margin, is an abuse. For the Greeks, there were good daimons as well as bad; and "demon" is not the real equivalent of "daimon."

experts a generation ago, it is that "the ritual is older than the myth: the myth derives from the ritual, not the ritual from the myth."<sup>1</sup> This principle, expressly posited by himself as by others before him, Sir James Frazer resolutely puts aside when he comes to deal with the Christian mythus. Disinterested science cannot assent to such a course.

That there were "tables" in the cults of many Gods is quite certain: temple-meals for devotees seem to have been normal in Greek religion;<sup>2</sup> and in the cults of the Saviour-Gods there were special collocations of sacramental meals with "mysteries." In particular, apart from the famous Eleusinian mysteries there were customary dramatic representations of the sufferings and death of the God in the cults of Osiris, Adonis, Attis, and Dionysos: in addition to a scenic representation of the death of Herakles; and a special system of symbolic presentation of the life of the God in the rites of initiation of the worship of Mithra.<sup>3</sup> It is not to be supposed that these religious representations amounted to anything like a complete drama, such as those of the great Attic theatre. Rather they represented early stages in the evolution which ended in Greek drama as we know it. Nearer analogues are to be found in the religious plays of various savage races in our own time.<sup>4</sup> What the mystery-plays in general seem to have amounted to was a simple representation of the life and death of the God, with a sacramental meal.

The common objection to the hypothesis even of an elementary mystery-play in the pre-gospel stages of

<sup>1</sup> *C.M.* 179, note.

<sup>2</sup> Cp. Athenæus, vi, 26-27; Schömann, *Griechische Alterthümer*, 3te Aufl. ii, 418-19; Foucart, *Des associations religieuses*, 50-52; Miss Harrison, *Themis*, p. 154; Menzies, *History of Religion*, p. 292.

<sup>3</sup> *P.C.* 194 sq., 306; *C.M.* 381, note.

<sup>4</sup> *G.B.* ix, 374 sq.

Jesuitism is that Hebrew literature shows no dramatic element, the Jews being averse from this as from other artistic developments of religious instinct. To this we reply, first, that the mystery-play, as distinguished from the primary sacrament, may or may not have been definitely Jewish at the outset; and that the drama as seen developed in the supplement to the gospels is certainly manipulated by Gentile hands. But the objection is in any case invalid, overlooking as it does :

1. The essentially dramatic character of the Song of Solomon.

2. The partly dramatic character of the Book of Job.

3. The dramatic form of the celebration of Purim.

4. The existence in the Hellenistic period of theatres at Damascus, Cæsarea, Gadara, Jericho and Scythopolis, the first two being, as we learn from Josephus, built by Herod the Great.

5. The chronic pressure of Hellenistic culture influence upon Jewish culture for centuries.

6. The prevalence of Greek culture influence at the city of Samaria, Damascus, Gaza, Scythopolis, Gadara, Panias (Cæsarea Philippi).

7. The "half-heathen" character of the districts of Trachonitis, Batanea, and Auranitis, east of the Lake of Gennesareth.<sup>1</sup> Galilee, be it remembered, was late conquered "heathen" territory.

8. The long and deeply hostile sunderance, after the

<sup>1</sup> On the points enumerated under heads 4-7 see Schürer, *Jewish People in the Time of Christ*, Eng. tr. Div. II, i, 11-36. In regard to my former specification of such influences (*P.C.* 204), Dr. Conybeare alleges (p. 49) that I "hint" that the Jesuit mystery-play was performed "in the temples (*sic*) built by Herod at Damascus and Jericho, and in the theatres of the Greek town at Gadara." This cannot be regarded as one of Dr. Conybeare's hallucinations: it is one of his random falsifications. No "hint" of the kind was ever given. The mystery-play is always represented by me as secretly performed.

Return, between the priestly and rabbinical classes and the common people of the provinces.<sup>1</sup>

9. The "resuscitation of obsolete mysteries" among the Jews, and the known survival of private sacraments and symbolic sacrifices of atonement.<sup>2</sup>

10. The actual production of dramatic Greek poetry on Biblical subjects by the Jewish poet Ezechiel (2nd c. B.C.).<sup>3</sup>

The eighth item needs to be specially insisted upon. It is frequently asserted that nothing in the nature of a heteroclite cult could subsist continuously in Jewry; that there were no religious ideas in the Jewish world save those of the Sacred Books of the Rabbis.<sup>4</sup> This is a historical delusion. The historical and prophetic books of the Old Testament affirm a constant resort to pagan rites and Gods before the Exile. There is official record of bitter strife and sunderance between those of the Return and the people they found on the soil. Malachi sounds the note of strife, lamenting popular lukewarmness, sacrilege and unbelief. The simple fact that after the Exile Hebrew was no longer the common language, and that the people spoke Aramaic or "Chaldee," tells of a highly artificial relation between hierarchy and populace. Never can even Judæa have been long homogeneous. "Neither in Galilee nor Peræa must we conceive of the Jewish element as pure and unmixed. In the shifting course of history Jews and Gentiles had been here so often, and in such a variety of ways, thrown together, that the attainment of exclusive predominance by the Jewish element must be counted among the impossibilities. It was only in Judæa that this was at least approximately arrived at

<sup>1</sup> Cp. Ezra and Nehemiah.

<sup>2</sup> *P.C.* 168 *sq.*

<sup>3</sup> Schürer, as cited, iii, 225.

<sup>4</sup> Thus Dr. Conybeare, constantly. Upon his view, the Essenes can never have existed.

by the energetic agency of the scribes during the course of a century.”<sup>1</sup>

The assumption commonly made is that all Jews and “naturalized” Jews were of one theistic way of thinking, like orthodox Christians, and, like these, could not imagine any other point of view. If for that entirely one-sided conception the inquirer will even substitute one in terms of the mixed realities of life in Christendom he will be much nearer the truth. Over and above the hatreds between sects and factions holding by the same formulas and Sacred Books, there were in Jewry the innovators, then as now: the minds which varied from the documentary norm in all directions, analogues of the devotees of “Christian Science,” Bâbists, British Buddhists, Swedenborgians, Shakers, Second Adventists, Mormons, and so on, who from a more or less common basis radiated to all the points of the compass of creed. What faces us in the rise of Christianity is the development of one of those variants, on lines of adaptation to popular need, with an organization on lines already tested in the experience of Judaism.

Among the common cravings of the age was the need for a *near* God,<sup>2</sup> one ostensibly more in touch with human sorrows and sufferings than the remote Supreme God. For the earlier Hebrews, Yahweh was a tribal God like Moloch or Chemosh, fighting for his people (when they deserved it) like other tribal Gods; a magnified man who talked familiarly with Abraham and Sarah, and wrestled with Jacob.<sup>3</sup> Even then, the attractions of other cults set up constant resort to them by many Yahwists, unless

<sup>1</sup> Schürer, as cited, i, 3-4.

<sup>2</sup> Cp. Gunkel, *Zum Verständnis des N.T.*, as cited, p. 20.

<sup>3</sup> The later documentists in such cases substituted an angel; but that was certainly not the early idea. See *C.M.* 112; Etheridge, *Targums on the Pentateuch*, i, 1862, p. 5.



the historical Sacred Books are as illusory upon this as upon other topics. To say nothing of the continual charges against Jewish kings, from Solomon downwards, of setting up alien worships, and the express assertion of Jeremiah <sup>1</sup> that in Judah there were as many Gods as cities, and in Jerusalem as many Baal altars as streets, we have the equally explicit assertion in Ezekiel<sup>2</sup> that "women weeping for Tammuz" were to be seen in or at the Temple itself. Now, Tammuz was a Semitic deity, borrowed, it would seem, from the Akkadians,<sup>3</sup> an original or variant of Adonis, the very type of the Saviour-God we are now tracing. Tammuz, like Jesus, was "the only-begotten son." If it be argued that the worship of Tammuz must have disappeared during or after the Exile, since it would not be tolerated in the Second Temple, the answer is that Saint Jerome expressly declares that in his day the pagans celebrated the worship of Tammuz at the very cave in which Jesus was said to have been born at Bethlehem<sup>4</sup>—a detail of some significance in our inquiry. Tammuz = Adonis = "the Lord." That worship, indeed, might conceivably be a revival occurring after the fall of Jerusalem; but to say that there can have been no folklore about Tammuz in Jewry or Galilee or Samaria between the time of Ezekiel and that of Jerome would be to make an utterly unwarranted assertion. The belief may even have survived under another God-name.

[Among the many obscurations of history set up by pre-suppositions is that which rules out all evidence for community of source in myths save that of philology, the most precarious of all proofs. The argument on this subject has been conducted even by opposing schools of philology as if all alike believed that every God, like every man, is an entity with a name, traceable by his name,

<sup>1</sup> Jer. xi, 13.<sup>2</sup> Ezek. viii, 14.<sup>3</sup> *P.C.* 162.<sup>4</sup> *P.C.* 321.

and remaining substantially unchanged in his attributes through the ages. When Max Müller propounded such derivations as that of *Zeus* from the Sanskrit *Dyaus*, some scholars for whom Sanskrit was occult matter observed a respectful deference, while others debated whether the derivations were philologically sound. To mythological science, strictly speaking, it mattered little whether they were or were not. God-ideas may pass with little change from race to race through contacts of conquest, the attached God-names changing alike for "absorbed" races and for those which "absorb" them, whereas other God-names may endure with little change for ages while the attributes connected with them are being continuously modified, and the tales told under them are being perpetually added to, and many are dismissed. The *Zeus* of the *Iliad* is probably a wholly disparate conceptual figure from the *Dyaus* of the early "Aryan," supposing the names to be at bottom the same vocable. The philological fact is one thing, the mythological fact another.

Writers like Dr. Conybeare, who have never even realized the nature of a mythological problem, bewilder their readers by blusterously affirming that there can be no homogeneity between myth-conceptions unless the names attached to them in different regions and by different races are etymologically akin. They irrationally ask for linguistic "equations" where a linguistic equation by itself would count for nothing, the relevant fact being the equation of the myth-concepts. Blind to the salient facts that every "race" concerned had undergone mutation by conquest; that God-names and God-ideas alike passed from race to race by intermarriages,<sup>1</sup> by the effects of enslavement, and by official adoption;<sup>2</sup> and that conquering races constantly adopted wholly or partly the "Gods" of the conquered,<sup>3</sup> they in effect assume that God-names and God-concepts are fixed entities, traceable

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.* the Biblical accounts of the adoption of Canaanite Gods by Israelites who married Canaanite women.

<sup>2</sup> *E.g.* the special adoption of Greek deities by Romans, apart from the political practice of enrolling deities of conquered States in the Roman Pantheon.

<sup>3</sup> *S.H.F.* i, 44-45.

solely by glossology. As if glossology could possibly pretend to trace, even on its own ground, all the transformations of proper-names and appellatives through different races and languages. The pretence that these are on all fours with the general development of language is mere scientific charlatanism.

What mythology has to consider is the filiation and interconnection of myth-concepts. This is so pervading a process that even Max Müller, after denying that there could have been any "crossing" between Vedic and alien lines of thought in respect of the closely similar Babylonian fire-cult and that of Agni, consented to identify the Indian Soma, God of Wine, with the Moon-God Chandra.<sup>1</sup> The transmutations of a cognate myth-concept under the names of Dionysos (who has a hundred other epithets) and of the Latin Liber, constitute a mythological process which philology cannot elucidate. The scientifically traceable facts are the prevalence and translation of such concepts as Wine-God, Sun-God, War-God, Moon-God, Love-Goddess, Mother Goddess, Babe-God, through many races and regions. One myth-factor of great importance, unrecognized by many who dogmatize on such problems, is that of the influence of sculpture,<sup>2</sup> through which such figures as that of the Mother-Goddess become common property for many lands, setting up community of belief on one line irrespective of prevailing theologies. And it is quite certain that as the nations came to know more and more of each other's Gods they borrowed traits and tales, thus assimilating the general concepts attached to wholly different names.

Seeing, then, further, that, as in the case of Yahweh, it was often a point of religious taboo that a deity should not be called by "his real name," and that nearly all had many epithets, there was no limit to the interaction and mutation of cults and God-norms. The exact derivation and history of the worship of Tammuz in Jewry no one can pretend to know; and no one therefore can pretend to know that it was not interlinked with other cults of names associated with sets of attributes, rites, and tales. In view

<sup>1</sup> *S.H.F.* i, 48-49.

<sup>2</sup> *C.M.* 35, and *note*.

of the idle declamation on the subject, it seems positively necessary to remind the reader that even if he believes in the historicity of Jesus he is not therefore entitled to assume the historicity of Tammuz-Dumzi-Adonis, or Myrrha, or Miriam, or Joshua; and that if he recognizes any connection, in terms of attributes, between the God-concepts Mars and Arès, or Zeus and Jupiter, or Aphroditê and Venus, or Artemis and Diana, and does not in these cases fall back upon the nugatory thesis of "two different deities," he is not entitled to do so over the suggestion that one popular Syrian cult of a Lord-name may have connected with another. There is really need here for a little critical vigilance, not to say psychological analysis.]

Even if we assume the earlier Jewish cult of Tammuz to have been swept away in the Captivity, the new conditions would tend to stimulate similar popular cults. When, after the Exile, the conception of Yahweh began under Perso-Babylonian influences to alter in the direction of a universalist theism, the common tendency to seek a nearer God was bound to come into play. There is no more universal feature in religious history than the recession of the High Gods.<sup>1</sup> The more "supreme" a deity becomes, in popular religion, the more generally does popular devotion tend to elicit Son-Gods or Goddesses who seem more likely to be "hearers and answerers of prayer." Sacred Books certainly tend to check such a reversion; and in Islam the check has been successful in virtue of the very fact that Allah, like the early Yahweh, is in effect conceived as a *racial* God, or God of a single cult. But the tendency is seen at work all over the earth.

The vogue of Apollo, of Dionysos, of Herakles, of Tammuz-Adonis, of Krishna, of Buddha, of Balder, of Athênê, of the Virgin Mary, of the countless deities propitiated by savage peoples who ignore their Supreme Gods, are all

<sup>1</sup> See many details in *C.M.* pp. 52-57.

testimonies to the natural craving of religious ignorance for a near God. The same craving certainly subsisted among the Hebrews in so far as it was not completely laid by organized legalism. And seeing that the redactors of the Sacred Books had actually reduced many early deities—Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Daoud = David, Moses, Joshua, and Samson—to the status of patriarchs and heroes,<sup>1</sup> the craving would among some be relatively strengthened. Jews who in time of trouble chronically reverted to alien Gods and alien rites, even as did the Greeks and Romans, could not conceivably fail altogether to adopt or cherish cults analogous to those of Dionysos, Adonis, Osiris, so popular among the neighbouring peoples.

The hypothesis forced upon us by the whole history, then, is that there had subsisted in Jewry, in original connection with a sacrificial rite of Jesus the Son of the Father, a Sacrament of a Hero-God Jesus, whose Name was strong to save. If it took the form of a Sacrament of Twelve, with the ritual-representative of the God, it would be closely analogous to the traditional Sacrament of Twelve in which Aaron [the Anointed One = Messiah] and the [twelve] elders of Israel “ate bread with Moses’ father-in-law before God.”<sup>2</sup> Behind that narrative lies a ritual *practice*. A sacrament of bread and wine is further indicated in the mention of the mythic Melchisedek, “King of Peace” and priest of “El Elyon,”<sup>3</sup> “without father and without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days or end of life, but made like unto the Son of God,” who thus became for Christists a type of Jesus.<sup>4</sup> A sacramental banquet of twelve seems to have

<sup>1</sup> Refs. in *P.C.* 51, note 6. Dr. Conybeare (pp. 29, 30) meets such conclusions of scholars (Stade, Winckler, Sayce, etc.) by excluding them from his list of “serious Semitic scholars.”

<sup>2</sup> Exod. xviii, 12.

<sup>3</sup> Gen. xiv, 18; Ps. cx, 4.

<sup>4</sup> Heb. vii, 3. Cp. v, 6, 10; vii, 11, 17.



been involved in the sacrificial ritual of the Temple itself, where a presiding priest and twelve others daily officiated.<sup>1</sup>

That Galilean or other Jews or semi-Jews, always in a partly hostile relation to priests, scribes, and Pharisees, should in an age of chronic war, disaster and revolution, maintain an old private sacrament, with a subordinate worship of a Hero-God Jesus whose body and blood had once literally and now symbolically brought salvation, is not an unlikely but a likely hypothesis. The gospels themselves indicate an attitude of demotic hostility alike to the king, the priests, the scribes, the Pharisees, and the Sadducees. It is not pretended that before and apart from Jesus there was no such hostility, and that he generated it by his teaching. In a united community such hostility could not be so generated. It was there to start with. If then cults of Dionysos and Attis and Adonis, the annually dying and suffering demigods, could openly subsist in the Hellenistic world alongside of the State cults of Zeus and the other chief Gods, a secret cult of a Hero-God Jesus could subsist in some part of Jewry, with its survivals of rural paganism and its many contacts and mixtures with Samaritan schism and Hellenistic culture. Yet further, if the popular needs of the Hellenistic world could elicit and maintain a multitude of private religious associations, each with its own sacramental meal,<sup>2</sup> the same needs could elicit and maintain them elsewhere.

To this thesis it is objected that we have no mention of the existence of a Jesus cult of any kind in the Hebrew books. But that is a necessity of the case. The Sacred Books would naturally exclude all mention of a cult which in effect meant the continued deification of Joshua,<sup>3</sup> who had long been reduced to the status of a mere hero in

<sup>1</sup> *P.C.* 179.

<sup>2</sup> *E.S.* 115; Hatch, Hibbert Lectures, p. 291 *sq.*

<sup>3</sup> Or Jehoshua—the Hebrew name of which *Iesous* is the Greek equivalent.



the history. That Joshua is a non-historical personage has long been established by modern criticism.<sup>1</sup> That he did not do what he is said in the Book of Joshua to have done is agreed by all the "higher" critics. Who or what then was Joshua? He is in many respects the myth-duplicate of Moses, whose work he repeats, passing the Jordan as did Moses the Red Sea, appointing his twelve, "renewing" the rite of circumcision, and writing the law upon stones. But he notably excels Moses in that he causes the sun and moon to stand still by his word;<sup>2</sup> and as this is cited from "Jasher," he is possibly the older figure of the two.

And for the Jews he retained a special status. In his Book he is made (with a "thus saith the Lord") to give a list of the conquests effected by him against "the Amorite, and the Perizzite, and the Canaanite, and the Hittite, and the Girgashite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite." In Exodus xx, this very list of conquests, barring "the Girgashite," is promised, with this prelude:—

Behold, I [Yahweh] send an angel before thee, to keep thee by the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Take ye heed of him, and hearken unto his voice: provoke him not, for he will not pardon your transgression; *for my name is in him.*

The Angel who possesses or embodies the secret or magical name<sup>3</sup> is to do what Joshua in the historical myth says has been done under his leadership:<sup>4</sup> both passages stand. Further, the Angel of the passage in Exodus is in the Talmud identified with the mystic Metatron,<sup>5</sup> who corresponds generally with the *Logos* of Philo Judæus,

<sup>1</sup> P.C. 163.

<sup>2</sup> The miracle of *hastening* the sun's setting is in Homer (Il. xviii, 239) assigned to Hêrê, the chief Goddess.

<sup>3</sup> P.C. 220.

<sup>4</sup> Josh. v, 13-15 is clearly late. In ch. xxiv the angel is not mentioned.

<sup>5</sup> P.C. 314, 315.

the *Sophia* or Power of the Gnostics, and the *Nous* of Plotinus. The eminent Talmudic scholar, Emmanuel Deutsch, surmised that the Metatron is "most probably nothing but Mithra," the Persian Sun-God; and as the promised Divine One in the Septuagint version of Isaiah, ix, 6, bears the Mithraic titles of "Angel of Great Counsel" and Judge, there is perhaps ground for some such surmise. It may have been, indeed, that the redactors of the sacred books originally meant to *substitute* the Angel for Joshua in the esteem of the people, giving the former the credit for the exploits of the latter; but such a manipulation would be in itself a confession of Joshua's renown. And in the Samaritan Targums "the Angel of God" commonly stood for the divine names Jehovah and Elohim.<sup>1</sup>

However that may be, the pseudo-historical Joshua could not have been elevated by the Talmudists to a divine status in other regards had he been a historical personage; and when we find him specially honoured in Samaria<sup>2</sup> we

<sup>1</sup> Etheridge, *The Targums on the Pentateuch*, 1862, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> The Samaritans have a late book ascribing to him many feats not given in the Jewish records. Concerning this Professor Drews wrote (*Christ Myth*, p. 57, note):—"The Samaritan Book of Joshua (Chronicon Samaritanum, published 1848) was written in Arabic during the thirteenth century in Egypt, and is based upon an old work compiled in the third century B.C." Dr. Conybeare (*Hist. Christ*, p. 33) declares the last statement to be "founded on pure ignorance," adding: "and the *Encyclopaedia Biblica* declares it to be a medieval production of no value to anyone except the student of the Samaritan sect under Moslem rule." Be it observed (1) that Dr. Drews *had actually described* the book as a medieval production; (2), that his whole point was that it was legendary, not historical; and (3) that the *Ency. Bib.* article, which bears out both propositions, uses no such language as Dr. Conybeare ascribes to it after the word "production," and says *nothing whatever* on the hypothesis that the book is founded on a compilation of the third century B.C. That hypothesis, framed by Hebraists, is one upon which Dr. Conybeare has not the slightest right to an opinion. Dr. A. E. Cowley, in the *Encyc. Brit.*, describes the book as derived from "sources of various dates." That being so, Dr. Conybeare, who as usual has wholly failed to understand what he is attacking, has never touched the position, which is that Joshua legends so flourished among the Samaritans that they are preserved in a medieval book—unless he means to allege that the legends are of medieval *invention*, a proposition which, indeed, would fitly consummate his excursion.

can draw no inference save that he was once a Palestinian deity. The fact that the name means "Saviour" <sup>1</sup> is of capital importance. In Jewish tradition and in his Book he is specially associated with the choosing of the Paschal lamb, the rite of the Passover, and the rite of circumcision.<sup>2</sup> Here then is the presumptive God for the early rite of Jesus the Son of the Father. As we shall see later, "the Angel of the Lord" is found to equate with "the Word of the Lord"—another cue for the gospel-makers. And in the Jewish New Year liturgy, to this day, Joshua-Jesus figures as the "Prince of the Presence," which again is supposed to identify him with Metatron as = *μετὰ θρόνον*, "behind the throne." Only as a Palestinian deity thus subordinated to Yahweh is he explicable. And as the "Angel of the Presence" again occurs in Isaiah, lxiii, 9, figuring as Saviour and Redeemer, it is fairly clear that there was *some* Jewish doctrine which made of Joshua a Saviour deity.

A high authority <sup>3</sup> pronounces that the "Angel of the Presence" is "probably Michael, who was the guardian angel of Israel." But Michael is a wholly post-exilic figure: was there no Hebrew prototype? However that may be, the ritual connection of the name Jesus (Joshua) with the title of *Prince of the Presence* has survived the intervention of Babylonian angelology, and remains to testify to a status for Joshua which can be explained only as a result of his original Godhood.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Yeho-shua = "Yah [or Yeho] is welfare." <sup>2</sup> Cp. Josh. v, 2-10.

<sup>3</sup> Canon Charles, *The Book of Jubilees*, 1902, p. 9, note 29.

<sup>4</sup> This thesis was substantially put by me in the first edition of *Pagan Christs* (1903). Dr. Conybeare, who appears incapable of accuracy in such matters, ascribes the Joshua theory (*Hist. Christ*, pp. 32, 35) and the special hypothesis that Joshua was mythically the son of Miriam, to Professor Smith, who never broached either. His pretext is a passage in the preface to the second edition of *Christianity and Mythology*, which he perverts in defiance of the context. On this basis he proceeds to charge "imitation." Aspersions in Dr. Conybeare's polemic is usually thus independent of fact.

[To this inductive argument the only answer, thus far, seems to be to argue, as does Dr. Conybeare, that while "no one nowadays accepts the Book of Joshua offhand as sound history," nevertheless Joshua is *there* "a man of flesh and blood."<sup>1</sup> On the same reasoning, Samson cannot be an Evemerized deity, though his mythical character is clear to every mythologist. Such considerations our amateur meets by alleging that if "half-a-dozen or more" men "come along" mistaking an "astral myth" for a man, we should "think we were bewitched, and take to our heels."<sup>2</sup> In this connection Dr. Conybeare represents me as declaring Jesus to be "an astral myth." It is not clear whether Dr. Conybeare, who supposes totems to be Gods, knows what "astral myth" means, so I impute rather hallucination than fabrication. The rational reader is aware that no such theory has been put or suggested by me.<sup>3</sup> But as to his thesis, which would seem to imply that even solar deities could never be supposed by "half-a-dozen" to be real men, it is sufficient to point out that Herakles, the typical solar Hero-God, was believed by millions in antiquity to be a real man; and that Samson, obviously = the Semitic Shamas or Shimshai, a variant of Herakles, was believed by millions of Jews to have been a real man. It is needless here to go into the cases of Achilles and Ulysses; but the reader who would know more of mythology than has been discovered by Dr. Conybeare and his newspaper reviewers may usefully investigate these themes.

As to Joshua, Dr. Conybeare, attempting academic humour, argues (p. 17) that if the hero is "interested in fruitfulness and foreskins" he ought to be conceived as a "Priapic god." The humorist, who pronounces his antagonists "too modest," seems to be unaware that

<sup>1</sup> *Historical Christ*, p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* pp. 8-9.

<sup>3</sup> Neither is it put by Prof. Drews, who merely cites (above, p. 41, note) from Niemojewski, without endorsing it, an "astral" theory of Jesus and Pilate. Dr. Conybeare appears incapable of giving a true account of anything he antagonizes, whether in politics or in religion. Elsewhere Drews speaks of astral *elements* in the Christ story; but so do those adherents of the biographical school who recognize the zodiacal source of the Woman-and-Child myth in Revelation.

Yahweh had the interests in question. Becoming "serious," he argues (p. 30) that "even if there ever existed such a cult, it had long vanished when the book of Joshua was compiled." For other purposes, he resorts (p. 16) to the test, "How do you know?" "Vanished," for Dr. Conybeare, means, "is not mentioned in the canonical Hebrew books." With his simple conceptions of the religious life of antiquity, he supposes himself to be aware of all that went on, religiously, in the lives of the much-mixed population of Palestine. His statement (p. 31) that "*the Jews*" in the fifth century B.C. "no longer revered David and Joshua and Joseph as sun-gods" is as relevant as would be the statement that they did not worship Zeus. No one ever said that "*the Jews*" carried on all their primitive cults in the post-exilic period: the proposition is the expression of mere inability to conceive the issue.

When, on the other hand, Dr. Conybeare proceeds to notice the thesis that the ancient Jesuine sacrament would presumably survive as a secret rite, he disposes of the proposition by calling it "a literary trick." That would be a mild term for his express assertion (p. 34) that I have claimed that "the canonical Book of Joshua originally contained" the tradition that Joshua was the son of Miriam—an explicit untruth. My reference to deletions from the book expressly pointed to the theses of Winckler, a scholar whom Dr. Conybeare supposes himself to discredit by expressions of personal contempt. Winckler never put the hypothesis as to Miriam.<sup>1</sup>

As to the survival of *many* private "mysteries" among the Jews, I may refer the reader to the section in PAGAN CHRISTS on "Private Jewish Eucharists" (p. 168 *sq.*), and in particular to the dictum, there cited, of the late Professor Robertson Smith (who has not yet,

<sup>1</sup> At another point (p. 87, *note*) Dr. Conybeare triumphantly cites Winckler as saying that "the humanization of the Joshua myth was complete when the book of Joshua was compiled." This grants the whole case. "Humanization" tells of previous deity; and just as Achilles remained a God after being presented in the Iliad, Joshua was "human" only for those whose sole lore concerning him was that of the Hexateuch.



I believe, incurred Dr. Conybeare's tolerably indiscriminate contempt), that "the causes which produced a resuscitation of obsolete mysteries were at work at the same period [after the Captivity] among all the Northern Semites," and that "they mark the first appearance in Semitic history of the tendency to found religious societies on voluntary association and mystic initiation." To the "first" I cannot subscribe, save on a special construction of "appearance." But Robertson Smith's proposition was founded on the documentary evidence; and when he writes that "the obscure rites described by the prophets have a vastly greater importance than has been commonly recognized," with the addendum that "everywhere the old national Gods had shown themselves powerless to resist the gods of Assyria and Babylon," we are listening to a great Semitic scholar, an anthropologist, and a thinker, not to a "wilful child," as Dr. Conybeare may charitably be described, in words which, after his manner of polemic, he applies to me.]

Finally, we have seen that a rite of "Jesus the Son," otherwise known as the "Week of the Son," was actually specified by the Talmudists of the period of the fall of the Temple. Taken with the item of the name Jesus Barabbas, "Jesus the Son of the Father," and the five-days' duration of the ritual of the sacrificed Mock-King, it completes a body of *Jewish* evidence for the pre-Christian currency of the name Jesus as a cult-name of some kind. It is now possible to see at once the force of the primary thesis of Professor W. B. Smith<sup>1</sup> that the phrase *τὰ περὶ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ*, "the things concerning the Jesus," in the Gospels and the Acts,<sup>2</sup> tells of a body of Jesus-lore of some kind prior to the gospel story; and also the significance of the fact that the narrative of the Acts represents the new apostle as finding Jesus-worshippers, albeit in small numbers, wherever he went.

<sup>1</sup> *Der vorchristliche Jesus*, p. 1 sq.

<sup>2</sup> Mk. v, 27; Lk. xxiv, 19; Acts xviii, 25; xxviii, 31.



To suppose that this could mean a far-reaching and successful propaganda by "the Twelve" in the short period represented to have elapsed between the Crucifixion and the advent of Paul is not merely to take as history, or summary of history, the miracle of Pentecost, but to ignore the rest of the narrative. First we are told (viii, 1) that after the martyrdom of Stephen the Christists "were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of *Judæa* and *Samaria*, except the apostles." It is only to Samaria that Philip goes at that stage, and his doings are on the face of them mythical. Yet Saul on his conversion finds the "disciple" Ananias at Damascus. Then Peter "went throughout all parts" (ix, 32), reaching Lydda, where *he* finds "saints"; and then it is that "*the apostles and the brethren that were in Judæa* heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God" (xi, 1). It is after this that "they that were scattered abroad upon the tribulation that arose about Stephen travelled *as far as Phœnicia and Cyprus and Antioch*, speaking the word to none save only to Jews. But there were some of them, *men of Cyprus and Cyrene*, who when they were come to Antioch spake unto the Greeks [*or Grecian Jews*] also, preaching the Lord Jesus" (xi, 19). Already there is an *ecclesia* at Antioch (xiii, 1) with nothing to account for its existence.

At this stage it is represented that Saul and Barnabas customarily preach Jesuism in the Jewish synagogues; and that only after "contradiction" from jealous Jews at Antioch of Pisidia do they "turn to the Gentiles" (xiii, 46), continuing, however, to visit synagogues, till the Jewish hostility becomes overwhelming. At Jerusalem, meanwhile, after all the gospel invective against the Pharisees, there are found "certain of the sect of the Pharisees who believed," and who stand firm for cir-

cumcision. Ere long we find at Ephesus the Alexandrian Jew Apollos, who "taught carefully the things concerning Jesus, *knowing only the baptism of John*," having been "orally instructed in the way of the Lord" (xviii, 25), but had to be taught "more carefully" by Priscilla and Aquila. Then he passes on to Corinth. Paul in turn (xix) shows at Ephesus, where he finds other early Jesuists, that they of the baptism of John, though by implication they held that "Jesus was the Christ," had not received "the Holy Ghost," which went only with the baptism of Jesus—the baptism which only the fourth gospel alleges (with contradictions), the synoptics knowing nothing of any baptism *by* Jesus or the disciples; and only Matthew and Mark even alleging that after resurrection he prescribed it. In all this the hypnotized believer sees no untruth. To the eye of reason there is revealed a process of primitive cult-building.

In whatever direction we turn, we thus find in the Jesuist documents themselves the traces of a "pre-Christian" Jesuism and Christism. At Ephesus, the believers "were in all about twelve men"—the number required for the primitive rite. The subsequent statement (xix, 9-10) that after Paul had debated daily for two years at Ephesus "all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks," is typical of the method of the pseudo-history. Either the whole narrative is baseless fiction or there were prior developments of the Jesus-cult.

It may be argued, indeed, that such a work of manipulation as the ACTS is no evidence for anything, and that its accounts indicating a prior spread of Jesuism are no more to be believed than its miracle stories. But however fictitious be its accounts of any one person, it is certain that there was a cult; and all critics are now

agreed that the book is a redaction of previous matter—probably of Acts of Paul, Acts of Peter, Acts of the Apostles, and so on. And whereas the most advantageous fiction from the point of view of the growing “catholic” church would be an account of the apostles as everywhere *making* converts, stories of their *finding* them must be held to have been imposed on the redactor by his material. There also it must be held to stand for some reality in the history of the cult, for the same reason, that there was nothing to be gained by inventing such a detail.

## § 2. *Prototypes*

Still we are met by the objection that whatever the Acts may say the gospels give no indication of any previous Jesus-cult. But that is a position untenable for the biographical school save by a temporary resort to the theory of myth-making. As Professor W. B. Smith has pointed out, the gospels expressly represent that the disciples healed the sick in the name of Jesus in places where Jesus had never been. For the supernaturalists, that is only one more set of miracles. But the biographical school, though it is much inclined to credit Jesus with occult “healing powers,” can hardly affirm such healing by means of a magic name, and has no resource but to dismiss all such matter.<sup>1</sup> Yet why should the evangelists have framed such a narrative save on the knowledge that the name of Jesus *was* a thing to conjure with in Palestinian villages?

It is true that the story is fully told only of the mission of the Seventy. In Matthew the Twelve are “sent”

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps an exception should be made of Dr. Conybeare, who believes Jesus to have been a “successful exorcist” (*M.M.M.* p. 142). This writer sees no difficulty in the fact that in Mark Jesus is no exorcist at Nazareth, and refuses to work wonders.

out but neither go nor return, for the narrative continues with them present. In Mark and Luke, the Twelve go and return without reporting anything, though Mark tells that they preached repentance, cast out many devils, and healed many sick by anointing them with oil. Evidently the mission was a heedless addition to the older gospel or gospels: the third attempts to give it some completeness. It is only the Seventy who make a report; and it is only of them (Lk. x, 1) that we are told they were to go to places "whither he himself was about to come." As the episode of the Seventy is in effect given up as myth even by many supernaturalists (who feel that, if historical, the episode could not have been overlooked in Matthew and Mark), the biographical school are so far entitled to say that for them the record does not posit a previously current Jesus-Name. But what idea then do they connect with the sending-out of the Twelve, if not the kind of idea that is associated with the sending-out of the Seventy?

M. Loisy feels "authorized to believe" (1) that Jesus in some fashion chose twelve disciples and sent them out to preach the simple "evangel" that "the Kingdom of God was at hand"—that is, merely the evangel of John the Baptist over again; and (2) that "it seems" that they went two by two in the Galilean villages, and were "well received: their warning was listened to: sick persons were presented to them to heal, *and there were cures.*" To say this is to say, if anything, that for the first Christians the Name of Jesus was held to have healing power before his deification, and that it was a known name.

But we have stronger documentary grounds than these. The Apocalypse is now by advanced critics in general recognized to have been primarily a *Judaic*, not

a Christian document.<sup>1</sup> The critics apparently do not realize that this verdict carries in it the pronouncement that Jesus was probably a divine name for some section of the Jews before the rise of the Christian cult. The twelve apostles enter only in an interpolation:<sup>2</sup> in the main document we have the "four and twenty elders" of an older cult,<sup>3</sup> answering to the twenty-four Counsellor Gods of Babylonia. Even if we assign the book to a "Christian" writer of the earliest years, at the very beginning of the Pauline mission,<sup>4</sup> we are committed to connecting the cult at that stage with the doctrine of the Logos,<sup>5</sup> with the Alpha and Omega, and with the Mithraic or Babylonian lore of the Seven Spirits. Of the gospel story there is no trace beyond the mention of slaying: on the other hand the Child-God of the dragon-story is wholly non-Christian, and derives from Babylon.

The entire book, in short, raises the question whether the Jesus-cult may not have come in originally (as so much of Judaism did), or been reinforced, from the side of Babylon, down even to the name of Nazareth, since there was a Babylonian *Nasrah*. As Samaria, the seat of the special celebration of Joshua, is historically known to have been colonised from Assyria and Babylon, the possibilities are wide. Suffice it that the Apocalypse indicates a strong Babylonian element in some of the earliest real documentary matter we have in connection with the Jesuist cult in the New Testament; and at the same time makes certain the pre-Gospel currency of a Jesus-cult among professed Jews.

Yet another clue obtrudes itself in the Epistle of Jude—or, as it ought to be named, Judas—a document notably Jewish in literary colour. Mr. Whittaker<sup>6</sup> was

<sup>1</sup> *P.C.* 164.<sup>2</sup> *Rev.* xxi, 14.<sup>3</sup> iv, 4.<sup>4</sup> *Cp.* ii, 9; iii, 9.<sup>5</sup> iii, 14, 15; xix, 13.<sup>6</sup> *Origins of Christianity*, ed. 1914, p. 27.



the first of the myth-theorists to lay proper stress on the fact that the reading "Jesus" (= Joshua) in verse 5,<sup>1</sup> alone makes the passage intelligible :—

Now I desire to put you in remembrance, though ye know all things once for all, how that Jesus [that is, Joshua, instead of "the Lord"] having saved a people out of the land of Egypt *the second time*<sup>2</sup> [Moses having saved them the first time], destroyed them that believed not. And angels which kept not their own principality, but left their proper habitation, he hath kept in everlasting bonds under darkness unto the judgement of the great day.

The reference is certainly to Joshua, who is here quasi-deified. Plainly, as Mr. Whittaker observes, "the binding of erring angels can only be attributed to a supernatural being, and not to a mere national hero."

And, as Mr. Whittaker also notes, we have yet another clear indication from the Jewish-Christian side that Joshua in Jewish theology had a heavenly status. In the "Sibylline Oracles" there occurs the passage :—

Now a certain excellent man shall come again from heaven, *who spread forth his hands upon the very fruitful tree, the best of the Hebrews, who once made the sun stand still*, speaking with beauteous words and pure lips.<sup>3</sup>

"The identification of Christ with Joshua," remarks the orthodox translator cited, "is a mixture of Jewish and Christian legend (*sic*) which is unique. It is no question of symbolism here, as Joshua in Christian writings is treated as a type of Christ, but rather the confusion is such as might be made by an ignorant

<sup>1</sup> Found in the Alexandrian and Vatican codices, and preferred by Lachmann, Tregelles, and Westcott and Hort.

<sup>2</sup> τὸ δεύτερον. The R.V. puts "afterward" in the text, with "Gr. *the second time*" in the margin. Mr. Whittaker reads "afterward" also, *after* "the second time"—apparently by oversight.

<sup>3</sup> Deane, *Pseudepigrapha*, 1891, p. 312.



person reading, Heb. iv, 8, 'if Jesus had given them rest,' and concluding that Jesus Christ led the Jews into Canaan. *The author, indeed, identifies himself with the Jews*, as where he prays (vers. 327 ff.): 'Spare Judea, Almighty Father, that we may see thy judgments'; and were it credible that the whole book was the work of one author, we should regard his religion as syncretic, and in full accord neither with law nor gospel. But the book . . . is of composite character. One writer may have been a Christian; another filches occasionally from Christian sources, but has no lively faith in Christ: like many of his countrymen at this time, he suspends his judgment, and instead of making a decision expends his energies in denunciation of the hated power of Rome, and in speculations concerning the future."

It matters not whether the writer was or was not a confident Christian: Judaic by upbringing or tuition he certainly was; and his identification of Jesus the Christ with Joshua is one more of the proofs that for many Jews Joshua had a quasi-divine status, as was fitting for a personage who "made the sun stand still." Taken collectively, the proofs cannot be overridden or explained away. Joshua was for the Jews of the Hellenistic period the actual founder of the rite of circumcision:<sup>1</sup> that is to say, mythologically, he was the God of the rite. But still more weighty is the evidence that his name lived on as that of the God-victim of a kindred rite; and it is on that basis that there was founded the rite which is for Christianity what circumcision had been for Judaism. Circumcision is a rite of redemption, the giving of a symbolic part of the body to "redeem" the whole—a surrogate for the Passover sacrifice of the first-born, developed into a racial theocratic rite. It is

<sup>1</sup> Josh. xxiv, 31, in Septuagint.

significant that the Saviour-God of this rite becomes the Saviour-God of the rite offered in place of that of the Passover, whereby the primordial human sacrifice is re-typified in that of the deity who once for all dies for all. It is upon such roots of pre-historic religion that the world-religions grow.

### § 3. *The Mystery-Drama*

That there was an actual mystery-drama behind the gospel tragedy is revealed by the document itself, which is demonstrably not primarily a narrative at all, but a drama transcribed, with a minimum of necessary elucidation. Only the habit of reading with uncritical reverence can conceal from a student the dramatic bareness and brevity of the record in the synoptics—a record which in the fourth gospel is grafted, without any real development, on a protracted discourse that only artificially suggests circumstantial reality. Chapter xiii is as it were inserted in the middle of that discourse; and chapter xiv proceeds as from the end of chapter xii. The original document cannot have had the story of the tragedy in this form. At the close of chapter xiv the “Arise, let us go hence,” is a slight artifice to suggest action where there is none. Only at chapter xviii is the action resumed; and it is as bare and formal as in the synoptics. Broadly speaking, the action is something superadded. A long discourse has been wrapped round the first section, but without altering its compressed character. The synoptics know nothing of the Johannine discourses: the Johannine document knows no more of a historic episode than do the synoptics: it can only invent monologues.

Reading the synoptic account, we find a series of

separate *scenes*, with the barest possible explanatory connection and introduction. The treason of Judas, in itself a myth,<sup>1</sup> is announced beforehand in three sentences, with no sign of reflection on the meaninglessness of the situation posited. A mystico-mythical episode of a message from the Master to one who is to prepare the passover meal comes next. In Matthew the message is to "such a man"—undescribed: in Mark, a man carrying a pitcher of water is to be seen and followed, and "wheresoever he shall enter in" the message is to be delivered to "the goodman of the house," and the room will be shown ready. To read biography in this, or to ascribe a "primitive" trustworthiness to the Marcan story, is to cast out criticism.

But the Supper itself is presented with the same ceremonial effect; the whole content being the mention of the betrayal and the dogmatic meaning of the ritual. In Mark, the whole episode of the Supper occupies eight sentences: in Matthew, where Judas puts his question and gets his answer, ten. After the singing of a hymn, the scene changes instantly to the Mount of Olives. No reason is assigned for the going out into the night: it is taken for granted that the Divine One is *going to his death*, of his own will and prevision. Either we believe this, making him a God, or we recognize a myth. Biography it cannot be. And drama it clearly is.

On the Mount, there is another brief dialogue, committing Peter and the other disciples—a wholly hostile presentment. Again the scene changes to Gethsemane, where the three selected disciples with whom Jesus withdraws actually sleep while he utters the prayer set down. There was thus no one to hear it. Any biographical theory which is concerned to respect veri-

<sup>1</sup> *C.M.* 352.

similitude must here recognize something else than narrative, and will presumably posit invention. But why should invention take this peculiar form? If the object was to impeach the disciples—and they certainly are impeached—is it not an impossibly crude device to *tell* of their sleeping throughout the prayer and its repetition, leaving open the retort: “You report the words of the prayer: from whom did you get them if not from those disciples, who must have heard them?” But if we suppose the scene first presented *dramatically*, no perplexity or counter-sense is involved. The impeachment is effectual; the episode is *seen*; and no one is concerned, in presence of a drama, to ask how certain words came to be known to have been spoken by any personage. It is the reduction to narrative form that betrays the dramatic source. And when we find in both Matthew and Mark, which clearly embody the same original document, this sequence:

And again he came, and found them sleeping . . .  
and they wist not *what to answer him* [nothing has been said]. And he cometh the third time, and saith unto them, *Sleep on now, and take your rest: it is enough; the hour is come*: behold, the son of man is betrayed. . . .  
*Arise now* . . . ,

the documentary crux, which the biographical school makes vainly violent attempts to solve, is at once solved when we realize that in the transcription two speeches have accidentally been combined. The drama must have gone thus:—

*The disciples still asleep.*

*Enter Jesus.*

*Jes.* Sleep on now and take your rest. [*Exit.*

*Enter Jesus.* (*Disciples still asleep.*)

*Jes.* It is enough: the hour is come, etc.

The transcriber, missing an *exit* and an *enter*, has simply run two speeches together; and the gospel copyists have faithfully followed their copy, putting "they wist not what to answer him" in the wrong place. In an original narrative the combination could not happen. In the transcription of the copy of a play it could easily happen. We find instances in the printing of the plays of Shakespeare and other early dramatists.

[One antagonist of the mystery-play theory, making no attempt to rebut the above solution, denies that it can be applied to the midnight trial before the priests, elders, and scribes. Of this trial M. Loisy recognizes the impossibility: pronouncing that, *sans doute*, the asserted search for witnesses by night never took place. But, says the objector <sup>1</sup>:—

(1) It may be incredible history; but it is *impossible drama*. I defy Mr. Robertson to say how it could have been represented on the stage, *or why it should have been given a place in a drama at all*. And he is searching for evidence of drama.

(2) The incident exists only in Mr. Robertson's imagination. The Greek phrase in Mk. xiv, 55, *is the regular phrase for sifting evidence*, and does not imply or suggest any hunting up of witnesses throughout Jerusalem.

We have here three propositions:—

1. The midnight search for witnesses is impossible in drama.
2. It is impossible to give a reason why it should have been put in a drama.
3. The record does not say that it took place.

The first is at once annihilated by briefly dramatizing the alleged procedure:—

*Priest* (or other official, to officials). Go and bring the witnesses to convict this fellow. [Exeunt Officials.  
*Priest consults with his fellows.*

<sup>1</sup> Art. by H. G. Wood in *The Cambridge Magazine*, Jan. 20, 1917, p. 216.



*Enter* Officials with a witness. *Exeunt* Officials.

Witness is examined: the evidence is confused.

*Enter* Officials with another witness. *Exeunt*.

Witness is examined: evidence conflicts with that already given.

(*And so with a series of witnesses.*)

*Enter* Officials with two more witnesses.

Witnesses, examined, testify, with some contradictions in detail, "This man said"—etc.

*High Priest (standing).* Answerest thou nothing? etc.

Where is the difficulty? It is precisely in drama, and in drama alone, that the impossible narrative *can* pass as possible. Action on the stage is always telescoped: time is always more or less ignored, because the selected action must go on continuously. Again and again in Shakespeare (or rather in pseudo-Shakespeare) we find irrelevant and futile scenes interposed to create the *semblance* of a time interval; but in *OTHELLO* and *MEASURE FOR MEASURE*, to name no other plays, the action is impossibly telescoped. The explanation is that in the psychology of the theatre time is disregarded, save by the most critical. The simple-minded audience of devotees which witnessed the Christist mystery-play would never ask "How *did* they hunt up those witnesses in Jerusalem at midnight?" *Solvitur ambulando*, so to speak: they *saw the trial*. It is when the play is transmuted to dead narrative, wherein a number of questions and answers are reduced to a few bald statements, that the impossibility obtrudes itself.

Our critic defies us to explain how such a trial came to be put in a drama. It is hard to see why he is puzzled. The general object of the whole tragedy is to show Jesus as the victim, first, of the priests, elders, and scribes—the Jewish ecclesiastical order, whose hostility to Jesus is a constant datum of the gospels. *At this stage* the mystery-play has become a Gentile-Christian performance, in which even the Jewish disciples play a poor part, while the official class are the mainspring of the tragedy. How could the priests be more effectively impeached than by exhibiting them as producing plainly suborned



evidence to convict Jesus? Lord Tennyson, in our time, put a bad freethinker in a bad play to discredit freethinking. And he had non-canonical as well as canonical precedents. The apocryphal "Acts of Pilate" appears to follow a drama in which a great many gospel episodes were dramatized as well as the trial.<sup>1</sup>

As for the critic's assertion that a midnight search for witnesses is not posited in the narrative, it is again impossible to follow his reasoning. If the *ἐξήτουν* . . . *μαρτυρίαν* of Mark means "sifted evidence," the *ἐξήτουν ψευδομαρτυρίαν* of Matthew means "sifted false evidence." The theory of "sifting" is impossible. I have had the curiosity to examine ten translations—Latin, German, modern Greek, Italian, French, and English, without finding that one translator has ever dreamt of it. All agree with the current English rendering, which means *sought* [false] *testimony*, because no other rendering is possible. The record goes on, in Mark:—

. . . and found it [*i. e.* the required evidence] not. *For many bare false witness against him* and their witness agreed not together. *And there stood up certain*, and bare false witness against him. . . . And not even so did their witness agree together. And the high priest *stood up*. . . .

According to the new theory, the prosecution "sifted evidence" which "stood up," as did the high priest.

Defending his thesis, the exegete argues<sup>2</sup> that the "evidence" was not written but oral; that is to say, the authorities had collected witnesses during the day and had then kept them till midnight or later without ascertaining what evidence they were able to give. The narratives neither say nor hint anything of the kind; whereas if such had been supposed to be the fact it would have been the natural thing to say so.

But the thing alleged is unnatural. On the one hand we are asked to believe that the authorities had before sunset collected a number of witnesses, when they could not have any certainty of making the arrest; on the other

<sup>1</sup> P.C. 202.

<sup>2</sup> *Cambridge Magazine*, Feb. 3, 1917, p. 289.

hand we are to believe that with all this extraordinary fore-planning they had not taken the normal precaution of ascertaining what the witnesses could say. In the transcribed drama as it stands, the authorities are represented as knaves; in the interpretation before us, framed to save the credit of the narrative, they are represented as childishly foolish. The narrative as we have it defies its vindicators. It tells that witnesses were *sent for*; and only in a drama, in which time-conditions are ignored, could such a fiction have been resorted to.]

The story is equally dramatic to the close. Everything is scenic, detached, episodic: it is left to Luke (who elaborates the Supper scene; gives a positive command of Jesus for the future celebration where the previous documents merely show the rite as it was practised; puts the denial of Peter before the trial; and *drops the whole procedure of the witnesses*) to interpose the episode of the daughters of Jerusalem between the Roman trial and the crucifixion; and even that is parenthetical and dramatic, as are the burial and the seeking; whereafter, in Mark, the gospel abruptly ends. The rest is supplementary documentation. How much of *that* may have been dramatized, it is impossible to say. That there had been evolution in the mystery-play is involved in our conception of it. It began with the simple Sacrament, at a remote period, the Sacrament itself being evolved from a primitive and savage to a symbolic form, the God being probably first represented, as in kindred rites,<sup>1</sup> by his sacrificial priest; and later by the victim.<sup>2</sup> It is after the primitive and localized cult seeks the status of a world-religion that the ritual developes into a quasi-history; and we can see conflicting influences in that. One writer causes Jesus to be buffeted and mocked at

<sup>1</sup> *G.B.* v, 45 *sq.*, 223; *P.C.* 364, 373-4.

<sup>2</sup> *P.C.* 112 *sq.*, 131 *sq.*, 140, 142, 144, 352, 362-4, 368.

the Jewish trial, as if to counterbalance the derision in the Roman trial; even as Luke interposes a third trial before Herod, to make sure that the guilt should ultimately lie with the Jewish government. In the action as in the doctrine, the Gentile influence finally predominates.

The important point to note in the documentary evolution is that the mystery-play remained a secret representation for some time after written gospels were current. To begin with, all the mystery-plays of the age were on the same footing of secrecy. What takes place finally in the Jesuist cult is a simple adding-on of the mystery-play to the gospels. It was not for nothing that the school of B. Weiss, seeking to expiscate a "Primitive Gospel" from the synoptics, made it end before the Tragedy. This was what they were bound to do by their documentary tests; and the common objection that such an ending is very improbable—a difficulty avowed by Weiss and weakly sought to be solved by some of the school—is seen in the light of the myth-theory to be a difficulty only for those who assume not merely the historicity of a Jesus but the historicity of the whole tragedy story down to the resurrection. Once it is realized that that story is a dramatic development of an originally simple myth of sacrificial death, the documentary difficulty disappears.

[It should not be necessary to point out the absolute falsity of the assertion of Dr. Conybeare (*Histor. Christ.*, p. 49) that in my theory "The Christian *Gospels* . . . are a transcript of the annually performed ritual drama, just as Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare* are transcripts of Shakespeare's plays." In *Pagan Christs* (p. 201) it is expressly argued that "the Mystery Play is an addition to a previously existing document. . . . The transcriber has been able to add to the previous gospel the matter of the mystery-play; and there he loyally stops." And

it is repeatedly pointed out that the transcription has been made with the minimum of necessary narrative connection. Thus the parallel with Lamb's *Tales* is false even as regards the matter posited as constituting the play; while the assertion that the whole of the gospel is represented as a transcription of a play is pure fabrication. And this mere falsification of the theory passes with traditionalist critics as a confutation.]

Some account, indeed, the Jesuists must have given of the death of their God or Son-God when they reached the stage of systematic propaganda; and this was in all likelihood a bare statement such as we have in the Epistles, that he was put to a humiliating death and rose again. It is very likely that accounts of the manner of the death varied in the first written accounts, as they certainly would in the traditions or rituals current at various points; and we may grant to the documentary critics that various versions may have attached to early forms or sources of Mark and Matthew. A general statement that Jesus was the "Son of the Father," and that he had been put to death with ignominy, would elicit, as has been above argued, the objection that "Jesus Barabbas" was certainly no divine personage. The Barabbas story, then, explaining away that objection, is a comparatively late development, of which, accordingly, we find not a single trace in the Acts or the Epistles. But similarly the Supper is not described in the Acts or the Epistles apart from the plainly interpolated account in First Corinthians. And at the outset the Supper would be emphatically secret matter, not to be written down.

Whatever conclusion, then, was given to the earlier gospel or gospels, it did not include that. As little would it give the Agony, or the trials before the Sanhedrim and before Pilate, throwing the guilt of the

tragedy on the Jews, or the episodes disparaging the apostles. Judas is in all likelihood primarily a figure of a Gentile form of the play, being just *Judaïos*, a Jew,<sup>1</sup> created by Gentile or Samaritan animus. What inferribly happened was a dramatic development, by Gentile hands, of a primarily simple mystery drama, consisting of the Supper, the death, and the resurrection, into the play as it now stands transcribed in the synoptics, with the Betrayal, the Agony, the Denial, the Trials, and the dramatic touches in the crucifixion scene.

The school of Weiss, then, on our theory, reached by comparatively consistent methods of documentary criticism a relatively sound conclusion. The earlier forms of the gospel certainly had not the *present* conclusion; and whatever simple conclusions they had were bound to be superseded when the complete mystery play was transcribed—the very transcription being a reason for their disappearance. At some point, probably by reason of the Christian reaction against all pagan procedure, the play, which in its present form must always have been special to a town or towns, was dropped, and though the tendency was to keep the Eucharist an advanced rite for initiates, and withhold it from catechumens,<sup>2</sup> the reduction of the Tragedy to narrative form became a necessity for purposes of propaganda. Without it, the gospels were inadequate to their purposes; and it supplied the needed confutation of the charge that Jesus was simply a victim in the Barabbas rite.

<sup>1</sup> *C.M.* 354. I find that Volkmar (there cited) had in one of his later works put the theory that the traitor, whom he held to be an invention of the later Paulinists, would be named *Juda* as typifying Judaism. The myth-theory is not necessarily committed to the whole of this thesis, but the objections of Brandt (*Die evang. Gesch.* pp. 15–18) seem to me invalid. He always reasons on the presupposition of a central historicity, and argues as if Mark could not have been interpolated at the points where Judas is named.

<sup>2</sup> *C.M.* 208, *notes*.



This said, we have still to face the main problem of the evolution of the Jesus-cult into a world-religion in which the God Sacrificed *to* the God becomes also the Messiah of the Jews and the Teacher of those who believe in him. And the tracing of that evolution must obviously be difficult. The process of extracting true out of false history is always so; and where the concocted history and its contingent literature are the main documents, we can in the nature of things reach only general conceptions. But general conceptions are attainable; and we must frame them as scientifically as we can.



## CHAPTER IV

### THE EVOLUTION OF THE CULT

#### § 1. *The Primary Impulsion*

PROFESSOR W. B. SMITH, whose brilliant, independent, and powerful advocacy of the myth-theory has brought conviction to readers not otherwise attracted by it, has stressed two propositions in regard to the evolution of the Jesus-cult. One is that the movement was "multifocal," starting from a number of points; <sup>1</sup> the other that the essential and inspiring motive was the monotheistic conception, as against all forms of polytheism; Jesus being *conceived* as "the One God." <sup>2</sup> That the first proposition is sound and highly important, I am convinced. But after weighing the second with a full sense of the acumen that guides all Professor Smith's constructive speculation, I remain of the opinion that it needs considerable modification.<sup>3</sup> In clearing up these two issues, we shall go a long way towards establishing a clear theory of the whole historical process.

In the first place, a "multifocal" movement, a growth from many points, is involved in all our knowledge of the highly important matters of the history of the early Christian sects, and the non-canonical Christian documents. Perhaps the proposition is even more widely true than

<sup>1</sup> *Der vorchristliche Jesus*, 1906, Vorwort by Schmiedel, p. vii, and pp. 27-28. *Ecce Deus*, 1912, pp. 18, 332.

<sup>2</sup> *Ecce Deus*, pp. 16, 18, 50 sq., 70, 135; *Der vorchr. Jesus*, p. 40. But see *Ecce Deus*, pp. 66 and 196, where the thesis is modified.

<sup>3</sup> In the *Literary Guide* of June, 1913, Professor Smith defends his thesis against another critic. The reader should consult that article.

Professor Smith indicates. To begin with, we find at an early stage the sects of (1) Ebionites and (2) Nazarenes or Nazareans, in addition to (3 and 4) the Judaizing and Gentilizing movements associated with "the Twelve" and Paul respectively; and yet further (5) the movement associated with the name of Apollos. Further we have to note (6) the Jesuism of the Apocalypse, partly extra-Judaic in its derivation; and (7) that of the ninth section of the TEACHING OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES, which emerges as a quasi-Ebionitic addition to a purely Judaic document—not yet interpolated by the seventh section. Yet further, we have (8) the factors accruing to the religious epithet "Chrēstos" <sup>1</sup> (= good, gracious), which specially attached to the underworld Gods of the Samothracian mysteries; also to Hermes, Osiris, and Isis; and (9 and 10) the Christist cult-movements connected with the non-Jesuite PASTOR of Hermas and the sect of the Eleesaites.<sup>2</sup> And this is not an exhaustive list.

(11) That there was a general Jewish ferment of Messianism on foot in the first century is part of the case of the biographical school. That there actually arose in the first and second centuries various Jewish "Christs" is also a historical datum. But the biographical school are not wont in this connection to avow the inference that alone can properly be drawn from the phrase of Suetonius as to a movement of Jewish revolt at Rome occurring in the reign of Claudius *impulsore Chresto*, "(one) Chrestus instigating."<sup>3</sup> This is not an allusion to the Greek epithet *Chrēstos* before referred to: it is either a specification of an individual otherwise unknown or the reduction to vague historic status of the source

<sup>1</sup> *S.H.C.* 33 sq.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* 35-36.

<sup>3</sup> On this problem cp. Prof. Smith, *Ecce Deus*, 251 sq.; and Prof. Drews, *Witnesses to the Historicity of Jesus*, Eng. tr. p. 19.

of a general ferment of Jewish insurrection in Rome, founding on the expectation of the *Christos*, the Messiah. In the reign of Claudius, such a movement could not have been made by "Christians" on any view of the history. As the words were pronounced alike they were interchangeably written, *Chrestos* (preserved in the French *chrétien*) being used even among the Fathers. Giving to the phrase of Suetonius the only plausible import we can assign to it, we get the datum that among the Jews outside Palestine there was a generalized movement of quasi-revolutionary Christism which cannot well have been without its special literature.

(12) In this connection may be noted the appearance of a quasi-impersonal Messianism and Christism on the border-land of Jewish and early Christian literature. Of this, a main source is the BOOK OF ENOCH, of which the Messianic sections are now by general consent assigned to the first and second centuries B.C. There the Messiah is called the Just or Righteous One; <sup>1</sup> the Chosen One; <sup>2</sup> Son of Man; <sup>3</sup> the Anointed; <sup>4</sup> and once "Son of the Woman." <sup>5</sup> Here already we have the imagined Divine One more or less concretely represented. He is pre-mundane, and so supernatural, yet not equal with God, being simply God's deputy. <sup>6</sup> When then we find in the so-called ODES OF SOLOMON, recently recovered from an Ethiopic version, a Messianic psalmody in which, apparently in the first Christian century, "the name of the gospel is not found, nor the name of Jesus;" and "not a single saying of Jesus is directly quoted," <sup>7</sup> it is critically inadmissible to pronounce the Odes Christian, especially when a number are admitted to have no Christian char-

<sup>1</sup> Enoch, xxxviii, 2; liii, 6.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.* xlvi, 2, 3, etc.

<sup>5</sup> *Id.* lxii, 5.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* xl, 5, and often.

<sup>4</sup> *Id.* xlviii, 10; lii, 4.

<sup>6</sup> Schodde's introd. p. 51.

<sup>7</sup> Dr. Rendel Harris, *Odes of Solomon*, 1909, introd. p. 72.

acteristics.<sup>1</sup> When, too, the writer admittedly appears to be speaking *ex ore Christi*, a new doubt is cast on all *logia* so-called. Such literature, whether or not it be pronounced Gnostic, points to the Gnostic Christism in which the personal Jesus disappears<sup>2</sup> in a series of abstract speculations that exclude all semblance of human personality. All the evidence points for its origination to abstract or general conceptions, not to any actual life or teaching. It spins its doctrinal web from within.

(13) And it is not merely on the Jewish side that we have evidence of elements in the early Jesuist movement which derive from sources alien to the gospel record. M. Loisy<sup>3</sup> admits that the hymn of the Naassenes, given by Hippolytus,<sup>4</sup> in which Jesus appeals to the Father to let him descend to earth and reveal the mysteries to men, "has an extraordinary resemblance to the dialogue between the God Ea and his son Marduk in certain Babylonian incantations."<sup>5</sup> He disposes of the problem by claiming that before it can weigh with us "it must be proved that the hymn of the Ophites is anterior to all connection of their sect with Christianity." The implication is that Gnostic syncretism could add Babylonian traits to the Jewish Jesus. But when we find signal marks of a Babylonian connection for the name Jesus in the Apocalypse we cannot thus discount, without further evidence, the Babylonian connection set up by the Naassene hymn. Nor can the defenders of a record which they themselves admit to contain a mass of un-

<sup>1</sup> Harris, as cited, pp. 118, 125, 128, etc.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Harris pronounces that an account in the Odes of the Virgin Birth (xix) must be later than the first century (p. 116). But this begs the question as to the source of that myth.

<sup>3</sup> *Apropos d'hist. des religions*, p. 272.

<sup>4</sup> *Refutation of all Heresies*, v, 5 (11).

<sup>5</sup> Cp. Drews, *The Christ Myth*, p. 54; and 2nd ed. of original, p. 24.

historical matter claim to have a ground upon which they can dismiss as a copyist's blunder the formula in which in an old magic papyrus Jesus, as Healer, is adjured as "The God of the Hebrews."<sup>1</sup> The very gospel records present the name of Jesus as one of magical power in places where he has not appeared. A strict criticism is bound to admit that the whole question of the pre-Christian vogue of the name Jesus presents an unsolved problem.

There are further two quasi-historical Jesuses, one (14) given in the Old Testament, the other (15) in the Talmud, concerning which we can neither affirm nor deny that they were connected with a Jesuine movement before the Christian era. One is the Jesus of Zechariah (iii, 1-8; vi, 11-15); the other is the Jesus Ben Pandira, otherwise Jesus Ben Satda or Stada, of the Talmud. The former, Jesus the High Priest, plays a quasi-Messianic part, being described as "The Branch" and doubly crowned as priest and king. The word for "branch" in Zechariah is *tsemach*, but this was by the pre-Christian Jews identified with the *netzer* of Isaiah xi, 1; which for some the early Jesuists would seem to have constituted the explanation of Jesus' cognomen of "Nazarite" or "Nazaræan."<sup>2</sup> The historic significance of the allusions in Zechariah appears to have been wholly lost; and that very circumstance suggests some pre-Christian connection between the name Jesus and a Messianic movement, which the Jewish teachers would be disposed to let slip from history, and the Christists who might know of it would not wish to recall. But the matter remains an enigma.

Equally unsolved, thus far, is the problem of the Talmudic Jesus. Ostensibly, there are two; and yet both seem to have been connected, in the Jewish mind, with

<sup>1</sup> Drews, p. 59; Loisy, p. 273.

<sup>2</sup> *C.M.* 316 *sq.*



the Jesus of the gospels. One, Jesus son of Pandira, is recorded to have been stoned to death and then hanged on a tree, for blasphemy or other religious crime, on the eve of a Passover in the reign of Alexander Jannæus (B.C. 106-79).<sup>1</sup> But in the Babylonian Gemara he is identified with a Jesus Ben Sotada or Stada or Sadta or Sidta, who by one rather doubtful clue is put in the period of Rabbi Akiba in the second century C.E. He too is said to have been stoned and hanged on the eve of a Passover, but at Lydda, whereas Ben Pandira is said to have been executed at Jerusalem. Some scholars take the unlikely view that two different Jesuses were thus stoned and hanged on the eve of a Passover: others infer one, whose date has been confused.<sup>2</sup> As Ben Pandira entered into the Jewish anti-Christian tradition, and is posited by the Jew of Celsus in the second century, the presumption is in favour of his date. His mother is in one place named Mariam Magdala = "Mary the nurse" or "hair-dresser"—a quasi-mythical detail. But even supposing him to have been a real personage, whose name may have been connected with a Messianic movement (he is said to have had five disciples), it is impossible to say what share his name may have had in the Jesuine tradition. Our only practicable clues, then, are those of the sects and movements enumerated.

It soon becomes clear from a survey of these sects and movements (1) that a cult of a *non*-divine Jesus, represented by the Hebraic Ebionites, subsisted for a time alongside of one which, also among Jews, made Jesus a supernatural being. Only on the basis of an original *rite* can such divergences be explained. The Ebionites come before us, in the account of Epiphanius, as using a form of the Gospel of Matthew which lacked the first two

<sup>1</sup> C.M. 363.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* 364.



chapters (an addition of the second or third century), denying the divinity of Jesus, and rejecting the apostleship of Paul.<sup>1</sup> It is implied that they accepted the story of the Last Supper and the Crucifixion. Here then were Jewish believers in a *Hero-Jesus*, the *Servant* of God (as in the TEACHING), not a *Son* of God in any supernatural sense. Ebionism had rigidly restricted the cult to a subordinate form.

On the other hand, we have in the Nazarean sect or fraternity a movement which added both directly and indirectly to the Jesuist evolution. In the so-called Primitive Gospel, as expiscated by the school of B. Weiss from the synoptics, there is *no* mention of Nazareth, and neither the epithet "Nazarene" nor "Nazarite" for Jesus. All three names are wholly absent from the Epistles, as from the Apocalypse: Jesus never has a cognomen after we pass the Acts. The inference is irresistible that first the epithet "Nazarean," and later the story about Nazareth, were additions to a primary cult in which Jesus had no birth-location, any more than he had human parents.

I have suggested<sup>2</sup> that the term may have come in from the Hebrew "Netzer" = "the branch," which would have a Messianic meaning for Jews. Professor Smith, who makes a searching study of Hebrew word-elements, has developed a highly important thesis to the effect that the word *Nazaraïos*, "Nazarean," which gives the residual name for the Jesuist sect in the Acts and the predominant name for Jesus in the gospels (apart from Mark, which gives *Nazarenos*),<sup>3</sup> is not only pre-Christian but old Semitic; that the fundamental meaning of the name (*Nosri*) is "guard" or "watcher" (= Saviour?), and that the appellation is thus cognate with "Jesus,"

<sup>1</sup> *Hæres.* xxx.

<sup>2</sup> *S.H.C.* 6; *C.M.* 316.

<sup>3</sup> *C.M.* 314.

which signifies Saviour.<sup>1</sup> On the negative side, as against the conventional derivations from Nazareth, the case is very strong. More than fifty years ago, the freethinker Owen Meredith insisted on the lack of evidence that a Galilean village named Nazareth existed before the Christian era. To-day, professional scholarship has acquiesced, to such an extent that Dr. Cheyne<sup>2</sup> and Wellhausen have agreed in deriving the name from the regional name Gennesareth, thus making Nazareth = Galilee; while Professor Burkitt, finding "the ordinary view of Nazareth wholly unproved and unsatisfactory," offers "a desperate conjecture" to the effect that "the city of Joseph and Mary, the *πατρις* of Jesus, was Chorazin."<sup>3</sup> In the face of this general surrender, we are doubly entitled to deny that either the appellation for Jesus or the sect-name had anything to do with the place-name Nazareth.<sup>4</sup>

That there was a Jewish sect of "Nazaræans" before the Christian era, Professor Smith has clearly shown, may be taken as put beyond doubt by the testimony of Epiphanius, which he exhaustively analyzes.<sup>5</sup> Primitively orthodox, like the Samaritans, and recognizing ostensibly no Bible personages later than Joshua, they appear to have merged in some way with the "Christians," who adopted their name, perhaps turning "Nazaræan" into "Nazorean." My original theory was that the "Nazaræans" were just the "Nazarites" of the Old Testament—men "separated" and "under a vow";<sup>6</sup> and that the two movements somehow coalesced, the place-name "Nazareth" being finally adopted to conceal the facts.

<sup>1</sup> *Der vorchristliche Jesus*, pp. 42-70; *Ecce Deus*, pt. vi.

<sup>2</sup> *C.M.* 314.

<sup>3</sup> Paper on "The Syriac Forms of New Testament Names," in *Proc. of the British Academy*, vol. v, 1912, pp. 17-18.

<sup>4</sup> *C.M.* 312. The thesis was put by me twenty-eight years ago.

<sup>5</sup> *Der vorchr. Jesus*, p. 54 sq.

<sup>6</sup> *C.M.* 316.

But Professor Smith is convinced, from the evidence of Epiphanius, that between "Nazarites" and "Nazaræans" there was no connection; <sup>1</sup> and for this there is the strong support of the fact that the Jews cursed the Jesuist "Nazoræans" while apparently continuing to recognize the Nazirs or Nazarites. That Professor Smith's derivation of the name may be the correct one, I am well prepared to believe.

But it is difficult to connect such a derivation of an important section of the early Jesuist movement with the thesis that Jesuism at its historic outset was essentially a monotheistic crusade. On this side we seem to face an old sect for whom, as for the adherents of the early sacrament, Jesus was a secondary or subordinate divine personage. Standing at an early Hebraic standpoint, the Nazaræans would have no part in the monotheistic universalism of the later prophets. The early Hebrews had believed in a Hebrew God, recognizing that other peoples also had theirs. How or when had the Nazaræans transcended that standpoint?

In the absence of any elucidation, the very ably argued thesis of Professor Smith as to the name "Nazaræan" seems broadly out of keeping with the thesis that a monotheistic fervour was a main and primary element in the development of the Christian cult; and that Jesus was conceived by his *Jewish* devotees in general as "the One God." This would have meant the simple dethroning of Yahweh, a kind of procedure seen only in such myths as that of Zeus and Saturn, where one racial cult superseded another. But the main form of Christianity was always Yahwistic, even when Paul in the Acts is made to proclaim to the Athenians an "unknown God"—an idea really derived *from* Athens. Only for

<sup>1</sup> *Der vorchr. Jesus*, pp. 56, 65.

a few, and these non-Jews, can "the Jesus" originally have been the One God; unless in so far as the use of the name "the Lord" may for some unlettered Jews have identified Jesus with Yahweh, who was so styled. The Ebionites denied his divinity all along. The later Nazareans were Messianists who did not any more than the Jews seem to conceive that the Messiah *was* Yahweh.

The whole doctrine of "the Son" was in conflict with any purely monotheistic idea. Nowhere in the synoptics or the Epistles is the Christ doctrine so stated as really to serve monotheism: the "I and the Father are one" of the fourth gospel is late; and the opening verses of that gospel show tampering, telling of a vacillation as to whether the Logos was God or "with God"—or rather "next to God," in the strict meaning of *πρὸς*. Here we have a reflex of Alexandrian philosophy,<sup>1</sup> not the evangel of the popular cult. Formally monotheistic the cult always was, even when it had become actually Trinitarian; and all along, doubtless, the particularist monotheism of the Jews was at work against all other God-names in particular and polytheism in general; but that cannot well have been the moving force in a cult which was professedly beginning by establishing an ostensibly new deity, and was ere long to make a trinity.

So far as anything can be clearly gathered from the scattered polemic in the Talmud against "the Minim," the standing title for Jewish heretics, including Christians as such,<sup>2</sup> they at least appear not as maintaining the oneness of God but rather as affirming a second Deity,<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cp. Philo Judæus, *De Profugis*:—"The Divine Word . . . existing as the image of God, is the eldest of all things that can be known, placed nearest, and without anything intervening, to him who alone is the self-existent."

<sup>2</sup> Friedländer's thesis that the Minim were early Gnostics seems to be completely upset by Mr. Herford, *Christianity in Talmud*, p. 368 sq.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.* pp. 255-266.

and this as early as the beginning of the second century. That the Jewish Rabbis took this view of their doctrine is explained in terms of the actual theology of the Epistle to the Hebrews. If there was any new doctrine of monotheism bound up with Jesuism, it must have been outside of the Jewish sphere, where the unity of God was the very ground on which Jesuism was resisted. As such, the Jewish Christians did not even repudiate the Jewish law, being expressly aspersed by the Rabbis as secret traitors who professed to be Jews but held alien heresies.<sup>1</sup>

I have said that "the Jesus" can have been "the one God" only for non-Jews. Conceivably he may have been so for some Samaritans. There is reason to believe that in the age of the Herods only a minority of the Samaritan people held by Judaism; <sup>2</sup> and there is Christian testimony that in the second century a multitude of them worshipped as the One God Sem or Semo, the Semitic Sun-God whose name is embodied in that of Samson. Justin Martyr, himself a Samaritan, expressly alleges that "almost all the Samaritans, and a few even of other nations" worship and acknowledge as "the first God" Simon, whom he describes as a native of Gitta or Gitton, emerging in the reign of Claudius Cæsar.<sup>3</sup> Justin's gross blunder in identifying a Samaritan of the first century with the Sabine deity Semo Sancus, whose statue he had seen in Rome,<sup>4</sup> is proof that he could believe in the deification of an alien as Supreme God, in his lifetime, in a nation with ancient cults. The thing being impossible, we are left to the datum that Sem or Semo or Sem-on =

<sup>1</sup> The fact that the Talmudic allusions to the Minim include no discussion of the Christist doctrine of the Messiah (Herford, pp. 277, 279) goes to show that a Messianic doctrine had been no part of the early cult, and that among the Jesuists who kept up their connection with Judaism it gathered, or kept, no hold.

<sup>2</sup> Cp. Volkmar, *Die Religion Jesu*, 1857, p. 287.

<sup>3</sup> Justin, 1 Apol. 26.

<sup>4</sup> *Id. ib.*



Great Sem was widely worshipped in Samaria, as elsewhere in the near East.<sup>1</sup>

Returning to the subject of "the magician Simon" in his *DIALOGUE WITH TRYPHO*,<sup>2</sup> Justin there repeats that the Samaritans call him "God above all power, and authority, and might." Remembering that the Jewish Shema, "the Name," is the ordinary appellative for Yahweh, we note possibilities of syncretism as to which we can only speculate. The fact that the Jews actually called their God in general by a word meaning "Name" and also equating with the commonest Semitic name for the Sun-God, while in their sacred books they professedly transmuted the sacred name (altering the consonants) to Adonai = Lord ("plural of majesty"), the name of the Syrian God Adonis, is a circumstance that has never been much considered by hierologists. It suggests that the Samaritan Sem also may have been "known" by other names; and the certain fact of the special commemoration of Joshua among the Samaritan Judaists gives another ground for speculation. The words of Jesus to the Samaritan woman in the fourth gospel, "Ye worship ye know not what," seem to signify that from the Alexandrian-Jewish standpoint Samaritans worshipped a name only.

What does emerge clearly is that Samaria played a considerable part in the beginnings of Christism. In a curious passage of the fourth gospel (viii, 48) the Jews say to Jesus, "Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a daimon?": and he answers with a denial that he has a daimon, but makes no answer on the other charge. The fact that Matthew makes the Founder expressly forbid his disciples to enter any city of the

<sup>1</sup> See the whole subject discussed in Appendix B.

<sup>2</sup> C. 120, end.



Samaritans, while an interpolator of Luke <sup>1</sup> introduces the story of the good Samaritan to counteract the doctrine, tells that there was a sunderance between Samaritan and Judaizing Christists just as there was between the Judaizers and the Gentilizers in general. From Samaria, then, came part of the impulse to the whole Gentilizing movement; and the Samaritan Justin shows the anti-Judaic animus clearly enough.

That Samaritan Jesuism, then, may early have outgone the Pauline in making Jesus "the One God," in rivalry to the Jewish Yahweh, is a recognizable possibility. But still we do not reach the conception of a zealously monotheistic cult, relying specially on a polemic of monotheism. Justin fights for monotheism as against paganism, but on the ordinary Judaic-Christian basis. This is a later polemic stage. Nor does the thesis of a new monotheism seem at all essential to the rest of Professor Smith's conception of the emergence of Jesuism. He agrees that it exfoliated from a scattered cult of secret mysteries: the notion, then, that it was at the time of its open emergence primarily a gospel of One God, and that God Jesus, is ostensibly in excess of the first hypothesis. It is also somewhat incongruous with the acceptance of the historic fact that it spread as a *popular* religion, in a world which desired *Saviour* Gods.<sup>2</sup> Saviour Gods abounded in polytheism; the very conception is primarily polytheistic; and all we know of the cast and calibre of the early converts in general is incompatible with the

<sup>1</sup> See *H. J.* 182.

<sup>2</sup> *Ecce Deus*, p. 68. In his article in the *Literary Guide*, June, 1913, Professor Smith argues that only as a protest against idolatry and a crusade for monotheism could Proto-Christianity have succeeded with the Gentiles. But that was simply the line of Judaism, which had no Son-God to cloud its monotheism. Surely Jesuism appealed to the Gentiles primarily as did other Saviour-cults, ultimately distancing these by reason of organization.

notion of them as zealous for an abstract and philosophical conception of deity. Whether we take the epistles to the Corinthians as genuine or as pseudepigraphic, they are clearly addressed to a simple-minded community, not given to monotheistic idealism, and indeed incapable of it.

In positing, further, a rapid "triumph" of Christism *in virtue of* its monotheism, Professor Smith seems to me to outgo somewhat the historical facts. There is really no evidence for any rapid triumph. Renan, after accepting as history the pentecostal dithyramb of the Acts, came to see that no such quasi-miraculous spread of the faith ever took place; and that the Pauline epistles all presuppose not great churches but "little Bethels," or rather private conventicles, scattered through the Eastern Empire.<sup>1</sup> He justifiably doubted whether Paul's converts, all told, amounted to over a thousand persons. At a much later period, sixty years after Constantine's adoption of the faith, the then ancient church of Antioch, the city where first the Jesuists "were called Christians," numbered only about a fifth part of the population.<sup>2</sup> "At the end of the second century, probably not a hundredth part even of the central provinces of the Roman Empire was Christianized, while the outlying provinces were practically unaffected."

Rather we seem bound to infer that Christianity made headway by assimilating pagan ideas and usages on a basis of Judaic organization. It is ultimately organization that conserves cults; and the vital factor in the Christian case is the adaptation of the model set by the Jewish synagogues and their central supervision. Of course even organization cannot avert brute conquest; and the organized pagan cults in the towns of the Empire went down ultimately before Christian violence as the

<sup>1</sup> Cp. *Les Apôtres*, p. 107; *Saint Paul*, pp. 562-3.

<sup>2</sup> Cp. *S.H.C.* 82.

Christian went down before violence in Persia in the age of the Sassanides. But Christian organization, improving upon Jewish, with no adequate rivalry on the pagan side, developed the situation in which Constantine saw fit to imperialize the cultus, as the one best fitted to become that of the State.

How then did the organization begin and grow? The data point insistently to a special group in Jerusalem; and behind the myth of the gospels we have historical and documentary ground for a hypothesis which can account for that as for the other myth-elements.

### § 2. *The Silence of Josephus*

When we are considering the possibilities of underlying historical elements in the gospel story, it may be well to note on the one hand the entirely negative aspect of the works of Josephus to that story, and on the other hand the emergence in his writings of personages bearing the name Jesus. If the defenders of the historicity of the gospel Jesus would really stand by Josephus as a historian of Jewry in the first Christian century, they would have to admit that he is the most destructive of all the witnesses against them. It is not merely that the famous interpolated passage<sup>1</sup> is flagrantly spurious in every aspect—in its impossible context; its impossible language of semi-worship; its “He was (the) Christ”; its assertion of the resurrection; and its allusion to “ten thousand other wonderful things” of which the historian gives no other hint—but that the flagrant interpolation brings into deadly relief the absence of all mention of the crucified Jesus and his sect where mention must have been made by the historian if they had existed. If, to say nothing

<sup>1</sup> 19 *Antiq.* iii, 3.

of "ten thousand wonderful things," there was *any* movement of a Jesus of Nazareth with twelve disciples in the period of Pilate, how came the historian to ignore it utterly? If, to say nothing of the resurrection story, Jesus had been crucified by Pilate, how came it that there is no hint of such an episode in connection with Josephus' account of the Samaritan tumult in the next chapter? And if a belief in Jesus as a slain and returning Messiah had been long on foot before the fall of the Temple, how comes it that Josephus says nothing of it in connection with his full account of the expectation of a coming Messiah at that point?

By every test of loyal historiography, we are not merely forced to reject the spurious passage as the most obvious interpolation in all literature: we are bound to confess that the "*Silence of Josephus*," as is insisted by Professor Smith,<sup>1</sup> is an insurmountable negation of the gospel story. For that silence, no tenable reason can be given, on the assumption of the general historicity of the gospels and Acts. Josephus declares himself<sup>2</sup> to be in his fifty-sixth year in the thirteenth year of Domitian. Then he was born about the year 38. By his own account,<sup>3</sup> he began at the age of sixteen to "make trial of the several sects that were among us"—the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Essenes—and in particular he spent three years with a hermit of the desert named Banos, who wore no clothing save what grew on trees, used none save wild food, and bathed himself daily and nightly for purity's sake. Thereafter he returned to Jerusalem, and conformed to the sect of the Pharisees. In the *ANTIQUITIES*,<sup>4</sup> after describing in detail the three sects before named, he gives an account of a fourth "sect of Jewish philo-

<sup>1</sup> *Ecce Deus*, p. 230 sq.

<sup>3</sup> *Life*, § 2.

<sup>2</sup> 20 *Antiq.* xi, 3.

<sup>4</sup> XVIII, i, 6.

sophy," founded by Judas the Galilean, whose adherents in general agree with the Pharisees, but are specially devoted to liberty and declare God to be their only ruler, facing torture and death rather than call any man lord.

A careful criticism will recognize a difficulty as to this section. In § 2, as in the LIFE, "three sects" are specified; and the concluding section has the air of a late addition. Seeing, however, that the sect of Judas is stated to have begun to give trouble in the procuratorship of Gessius Florus, when Josephus was in his twenties, it is quite intelligible that he should say nothing of it when naming the sects who existed in his boyhood, and that he should treat it in a subsidiary way in his fuller account of them in the ANTIQUITIES. It is not so clear why he should in the first section of that chapter call Judas "a Gaulanite, of a city whose name was Gamala," and in the final section call him "Judas the Galilean." There was a Gamala in Gaulanitis and another in Galilee. But the discrepancy is soluble on the view that the sixth section was added some time after the composition of the book. There seems no adequate ground for counting it spurious.

On what theory, then, are we to explain the total silence of Josephus as to the existence of the sect of Jesus of Nazareth, if there be any historical truth in the gospel story? It is of no avail to suggest that he would ignore it by reason of his Judaic hostility to Christism. He is hostile to the sect of Judas the Galilean. There is nothing in all his work to suggest that he would have omitted to name any noticeable sect with a definite and outstanding doctrine because he disliked it. He seems much more likely, in that case, to have described and disparaged or denounced it.

And here emerges the hypothesis that he did disparage or denounce the Christian sect in some passage which has been deleted by Christian copyists, perhaps in the very



place now filled by the spurious paragraph, where an account of Jesuism as a *calamity* to Judaism would have been relevant in the context. This suggestion is nearly as plausible as that of Chwolson, who would reckon the existing paragraph a description of a Jewish calamity, is absurd. And it is the possibility of this hypothesis that alone averts an absolute verdict of non-historicity against the gospel story in terms of the silence of Josephus. The biographical school may take refuge, at this point, in the claim that the Christian forger, whose passage was clearly unknown to Origen, *perhaps* eliminated by his fraud a historic testimony to the historicity of Jesus, and also an account of the sect of Nazaræans.

But that is all that can be claimed. The fact remains that in the *LIFE*, telling of his youthful search for a satisfactory sect, Josephus says not a word of the existence of that of the crucified Jesus; that he nowhere breathes a word concerning the twelve apostles, or any of them, or of Paul; and that there is no hint in any of the Fathers of even a hostile account of Jesus by him in any of his works, though Origen makes much of the allusion to James the Just,<sup>1</sup>—also dismissible as an interpolation, like another to the same effect cited by Origen, but not now extant.<sup>2</sup> There is therefore a strong negative presumption to be set against even the forlorn hypothesis that the passage forged in Josephus by a Christian scribe ousted one which gave a hostile testimony.

Over a generation ago, Mr. George Solomon of Kingston, Jamaica, noting the general incompatibility of Josephus with the gospel story and the unhistorical aspect of the latter, constructed an interesting theory,<sup>3</sup> of which I

<sup>1</sup> 20 *Antiq.* ix, 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Ecce Deus*, pp. 235-6.

<sup>3</sup> *The Jesus of History and the Jesus of Tradition Identified.* By George Solomon. Reeves and Turner, 1880.



have seen no discussion, but which merits notice here. It may be summarized thus :—

1. Banos is probably the historical original of the gospel figure of John the Baptist.

2. Josephus names and describes two Jesuses, who are blended in the figure of the gospel Jesus: (a) the Jesus (WARS, VI, v, 3) who predicts "woe to Jerusalem"; is flogged till his bones show, but never utters a cry; makes no reply when challenged; returns neither thanks for kindness nor railing for railing; and is finally killed by a stone projectile in the siege; and (b) Jesus the Galilean (LIFE, §§ 12, 27), son of Sapphias, who opposes Josephus, is associated with Simon and John, and has a following of "sailors and poor people," one of whom betrays him (§ 22), whereupon he is captured by a stratagem, his immediate followers forsaking him and flying.<sup>1</sup> Before this point, Josephus has taken seventy of the Galileans with him (§ 14) as hostages, and, making them his friends and companions on his journey, sets them "to judge causes." This is the hint for Luke's story of the seventy disciples.

3. The "historical Jesus" of the siege, who is "meek" and venerated as a prophet and martyr, being combined with the "Mosaic Jesus" of Galilee, a disciple of Judas of Galilee, who resisted the Roman rule and helped to precipitate the war, the memory of the "sect" of Judas the Gaulanite or Galilean, who began the anti-Roman trouble, is also transmuted into a myth of a sect of Jesus of Galilee, who has fishermen for disciples, is followed by poor Galileans, is betrayed by one companion and deserted

<sup>1</sup> Here Mr. Solomon, without offering any explanation, identifies Josephus's Jesus son of Sapphias, who was chief magistrate in Tiberias, with Jesus the robber captain of the borders of Ptolemais (§ 22)—a different person. I give his theory as he puts it. (Work cited, pp. 164-179.)

by the rest, and is represented finally as dying under Pontius Pilate, though at that time there had been no Jesuine movement.

4. The Christian movement, thus mythically grounded, grows up after the fall of the Temple. Paul's "the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost" (1 Thess. ii, 16) tells of the destruction of the Temple, as does Hebrews xii, 24-28; xiii, 12-14.

This theory of the construction of the myth out of historical elements in Josephus is obviously speculative in a high degree; and as the construction fails to account for either the central rite or the central myth of the crucifixion it must be pronounced inadequate to the data. On the other hand, the author develops the negative case from the silence of Josephus as to the gospel Jesus with an irresistible force; and though none of his solutions is founded-on in the constructive theory now elaborated, it may be that some of them are partly valid. The fact that he confuses Jesus the robber captain who was betrayed, and whose companions deserted him, with Jesus the "Mosaic" magistrate of Tiberias, who was followed by sailors and poor people, and was "an innovator beyond everybody else," does not exclude the argument that traits of one or the other, or of the Jesus of the siege, may have entered into the gospel mosaic.

### § 3. *The Myth of the Twelve Apostles*

All careful investigators have been perplexed by the manner of the introduction of "the Twelve" in the gospels; and they would have been still more so if they had realized the total absence of any reason in the texts for the creation of disciples or apostles at all. Disciples to learn—what? Apostles to teach—what? The choos-

ing is as plainly mythical as the function. In Mark (i, 16) and Matthew (iv, 18), Jesus calls upon the brothers Simon and Andrew to leave their fishing and "become fishers of men." They come at the word; and immediately afterwards the brothers James and John do the same. There is no pretence of previous teaching: it is the act of the God.<sup>1</sup> In Matthew, at the calling of the apostle Matthew (ix, 9), who in Mark (ii, 14) becomes Levi the son of Alphæus, the procedure is the same: "Follow me."

Then, with no connective development whatever, we proceed at one stroke to the full number.<sup>2</sup> Matthew actually makes the mission of the twelve the point of choosing, saying simply (x, 1): "And he called unto him *his* twelve disciples," adding their names. In Mark (iii, 13) we have constructive myth:—

And he goeth up into the mountain, and calleth unto him whom he himself would: and they went unto him. And he appointed twelve, that they might be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach, and to have authority to cast out devils.

And the lists converge. Levi has now disappeared from Mark's record, and we have instead "*James* the son of Alphæus," but with Matthew in also. The lists of the first two synoptics have been harmonized. In Luke, where only three are at first called, after a miracle (v, 1-11), the twelve are also summarily chosen on a mountain; and here the list varies: Levi, who has been separately called (v, 27) as in Mark, disappears here also in favour of "*James of Alphæus*"; but there is no Thaddæus, and

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Conybeare puts it as axiomatic that Jesus always speaks in Mark "as a Jew to Jews." Thus are facts "gross as a mountain, open, palpable," sought to be outfaced by verbiage.

<sup>2</sup> This aspect of the problem seems to be ignored by Erich Haupt (*Zum Verständnis des Apostolats im neuen Testament* 1896), who finds the choice of the twelve historical.

there are two Judases, one being "of James," which may mean either son or brother. And this Judas remains on the list in the Acts. Candid criticism cannot affirm that we have here the semblance of veridical biography. The calling of the twelve has been *imposed upon* an earlier narrative, with an arbitrary list, which is later varied. The calling of the fishermen, to begin with, is a symbolical act, as is the calling of a tax-gatherer. The calling of the twelve is a more complicated matter.

In searching for the roots of a pre-Christian Jesus-cult in Palestine, we have noted the probability that it centred in a rite of twelve participants, with the "Anointed One," the representative of the God, and anciently the actual victim, as celebrating priest. The Anointed One is "the Christ"; and the Christ, on the hypothesis, is Jesus Son of the Father. The twelve, as in the case of the early Jesus-cult at Ephesus, form as it were "the Church." A body of twelve, then, who might term themselves "Brethren of the Lord," may well have been one of the starting-points of Jewish Jesuism.

But the first two synoptics, clearly, started with a group of only four disciples, to which a fifth was added; and in John (i, 35-49) the five are made up at once, in a still more supernatural manner than in the synoptics, two being taken from the following of John the Baptist. Then, still more abruptly than in the synoptics, we have the completion (vi, 70):—"Did not I choose you the twelve, and one of you is a devil?" It would be idle to say merely that the twelve are suddenly imposed on the narrative, leaving a biographical five: the five are just as evidently given unhistorically, for some special reason, mythical or other.

Now, though fives and fours and threes are all quasi-sacred numbers in the Old Testament, it is noteworthy

that in one of the Talmudic allusions to Jesus Ben-Stada he is declared to have had five disciples—Matthai, Nakai or Neqai, Nezer or Netzer, Boni or Buni, *and also* Thoda, all of whom are ostensibly though not explicitly described as having been put to death.<sup>1</sup> As this passage points to the Jesus who is otherwise indicated as post-Christian, it cannot critically be taken as other than a reference to a current Christian list of five, though it may conceivably have been a miscarrying reference to the Jesus of the reign of Alexander Jannæus. In any case, it is aimed at a set of five; and there is never any Talmudic mention of a twelve. If, then, the Talmudic passage was framed by way of a stroke against the Christians it must have been made at a time when the list of twelve had not been imposed on the gospels. Further, it is to be noted that it provides for a Matthew, and perhaps for a "Mark," the name "Nakai" being put next to Matthew's; while in Boni and Netzer we have ostensible founders for the Ebionites and Nazaræans. Finally, Thoda looks like the native form of Thaddæus; though it might perhaps stand for the Theudas of Acts v, 36. Seeing how names are juggled with in the official list and in the MS. variants ("Lebbæus whose surname was Thaddæus" stood in the Authorised Version, on the strength of the Codex Bezae), it cannot be argued that the Gemara list is not possibly an early form or basis of that in the synoptics; though on the other hand the names Boni and Netzer suggest a mythopœic origin for Ebionites and Nazarenes. Leaving this issue aside as part of the unsolved problem of the Talmudic Jesus, we are again driven to note the unhistoric apparition of the twelve.

Following the documents, we find the later traces

<sup>1</sup> See the passage in Baring Gould's *Lost and Hostile Gospels*, 1874, p. 61; and in Herford's *Christianity in Talmud and Midrash*, 1903, p. 90.



equally unveridical. Matthew is introduced in the Acts as being chosen to make up the number of the twelve, on the death of Judas; but never again is such a process mentioned; and Matthew plays no part in the further narrative. And of course the cult was interdicted from further maintenance of the number as soon as it was settled that the twelve were to sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel, which had apparently been done in an early Judaic form of the Apocalypse before it was intimated in the gospels. Even in the Epistles, however, there is no real trace of an active group of twelve. The number is mentioned only in a passage (1 Cor. xv, 5) where there is interpolation upon interpolation, for after the statement that the risen Jesus appeared "then to the twelve" there shortly follows "then to all the apostles," that is, on the traditionist assumption, to the twelve again—the exclusion of Judas not being recognized. The first-cited clause could be interpolated in order to insert the number; the second could not have been inserted if the other were already there.

That is the sole allusion. We find none where we might above all expect it, in the pseudo-biographical epistle to the Galatians, though there is mention in the opening chapter of "them which were apostles before me," "the apostles," "James the brother of the Lord" (*never mentioned as an apostle in the gospels unless he be James the son of Alphæus or James the son of Zebedee: that is, not a brother of Jesus but simply a group-brother*), and "James and Cephas and John, who were [*or are*] reputed to be pillars." The language used in verse 6 excludes the notion that the writer believed "the apostles" to have had personal intercourse with the Founder. Thus even in a pseudepigraphic work, composed after Paul's time, there is no suggestion that he had to deal



with the twelve posited by the gospels and the Acts. And all the while "apostles" without number continue to figure in the documents. They were in fact a numerous class in the early Church. It is not surprising that the late Professor Cheyne not only rejected the story of the Betrayal but declared that "The 'Twelve Apostles,' too, are to me as unhistorical as the seventy disciples."<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, we have a decisive reason for the *invention* of the Twelve story in the latterly recovered TEACHING OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES<sup>2</sup> (commonly cited as the *Didaché*), a document long current in the early church. Of that book, the first six chapters, forming nearly half of the matter, are purely ethical and monotheistic, developing the old formula of the "Two Ways" of life and death; and saying nothing of Jesus or Christ or the Son, or of baptism or sacrament. Then comes a palpably late interpolation, giving a formula for baptism in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Even in the ninth section, dealing with the Eucharist, we have only "the holy vine of David thy Servant, which thou hast made known to us through Jesus thy Servant."<sup>3</sup> The tenth, which is evidently later, and is written as a conclusion, retains that formula. After that come warnings against false apostles and prophets; and only in the twelfth section does the word "Christian" occur. Still later there is specified "the Lord's-day (*κυριακήν*) of the Lord." Then comes a prescription for the election of bishops; and the document ends with a chapter preparing for the expected "last days."

Here then we have an originally Jewish document,

<sup>1</sup> *Hibbert Journal*, July, 1911, cited by Prof. Smith, *Ecce Deus*, p. 318.

<sup>2</sup> *C.M.* 344. For the convenience of the reader I reprint in an Appendix an annotated translation I published in 1891—a revision of that of Messrs. Hitchcock and Brown, compared with a number of others.

<sup>3</sup> Cp. "His Servant Jesus" in Acts iii, 13, 26; iv, 27, 30.

bearing the title TEACHING OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES, adopted and gradually added to by early Jesuists who did not deify Jesus, though like the early Christians in general they expected the speedy end of the world. Though their Jesus is not deified, he has no cognomen. He is neither "of Nazareth," nor "the Nazarite;" and he is an ostensibly mythical figure, not a teacher but a rite-founder, for his adherents. They do not belong to an organized Church; and the baptismal section, with its Trinitarian formula, is quite certainly one of the latest of all. The eighth, which connects quite naturally with the sixth, and which contains the "Lord's Prayer," raises the question whether it belonged to the pre-Christian document, and has been merely interpolated with the phrase as to "the Lord . . . his gospel." There are strong reasons for regarding the Lord's Prayer as a pre-Christian Jewish composition,<sup>1</sup> founded on very ancient Semitic prayers. Seeing that "the Lord" has in all the previous sections of the treatise clearly meant "God" and not "Christ," the passage about the gospel is probably Jesuist; but it does not at all follow that the Prayer is.

Mr. Cassels, in the section on the TEACHING added by him in the one-volume reprint of his great work, points<sup>2</sup> to the fact that in the recovered fragment of a Latin translation of an early version of "The Two Ways," there do not occur the passages connecting with the Sermon on the Mount which are found in the TEACHING; and as the same holds of the Two Ways section of the EPISTLE OF BARNABAS, it may fairly be argued that it was a Christian hand that added them here. But when we note that at the points at which the passages in the TEACHING vary from the gospel—as "Gentiles" for

<sup>1</sup> *C.M.* 415 sq.

<sup>2</sup> *Supernatural Religion*, R.P.A. rep. p. 153.

"tax-gatherers,"<sup>1</sup>—the term in the former is perfectly natural for Jewish teachers addressing Jews in Gentile countries, and that in the latter rather strained in an exhortation to Jews in their own country, it becomes very conceivable that this is the original, or a prior form, of the gospel passage. The Sermon on the Mount is certainly a compilation. This then may have been one of the sources. And it is quite conceivable that the Jewish Apostles should teach their people not to pray "as do the hypocrites," an expression which Mr. Cassels takes to be directed by Jesuists against Jews in general.

Seeing that even conservative critics have admitted the probable priority of the TEACHING to BARNABAS, it is no straining of the probabilities to suggest that the Two Ways section of BARNABAS is either a variant, inspired by the TEACHING, on what was clearly a very popular line of homily,<sup>2</sup> or an annexation of another Jewish homily of that kind. That in the TEACHING is distinctly the better piece of work, as we should expect the official manual of the Apostles of the High Priest to be. It is inexact to say, as does Dr. M. R. James,<sup>3</sup> that the section "reappears" in BARNABAS. There are many differences, as well as many identities. The other is not a mere copy, but an exercise on the same standard theme, with "light and darkness" for the stronger "life and death." It is a mistake to suppose that there was a definite "original" of "The Two Ways": it is a standing ethical theme, evidently handled by many.<sup>4</sup> If, then, the TEACHING preceded BARNABAS, it may already have contained, in its purely Jewish form, the Lord's Prayer, which is so thoroughly Jewish, and items

<sup>1</sup> See the notes to translation in Appendix.

<sup>2</sup> It goes back to Jeremiah, xxi, 8.

<sup>3</sup> *Encyc. Bib.* i, 261.

<sup>4</sup> Cp. Prof. A. Seeberg, *Die Didache des Judentums und der Urchristenheit*, 1908, p. 8; and his previous works, cited by him.

of the Sermon on the Mount, which is certainly a Jewish compilation. And the justified critical presumption is that it did contain them. The onus of disproof lies on the Christian side.

We now reach our solution. The original document was in any case a manual of teaching used among the scattered Jews and proselytes of the Dispersion by the actual and historical Twelve Apostles either of the High Priest before or of the Patriarch after the fall of Jerusalem. The historic existence of that body before and after the catastrophe is undisputed;<sup>1</sup> and the nature of its teaching functions can be confidently inferred from the known currency of a Judaic ethical teaching in the early Christian period. The demonstration of that is supplied by an expert of the biographical school who considers the TEACHING to have been "known to Jesus and the Baptist."<sup>2</sup> Such a document cannot rationally be supposed to be a compilation made by or for Christists using the gospels: such a compilation would have given the gospel view of Jesus.<sup>3</sup> The primary TEACHING, including as it probably does the Lord's Prayer, is the earlier thing: the gospels use it. It is in fact one of the first documents of "Christianity," if not the first. And its titular "twelve apostles" are Jewish and not Christian.

Given, then, such a document in the hands of the early Jesuist organization—or one of the organizations—twelve apostles had to be provided in the legend to take the credit for the TEACHING.<sup>4</sup> The new cult, once it

<sup>1</sup> C.M. 344.

<sup>2</sup> A. Seeberg, work cited, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Conybeare nevertheless (*Histor. Christ*, p. 3) calls it a "characteristically Christian document," in an argument which maintains the early currency and general historicity of Mark.

<sup>4</sup> This thesis was put in C.M. 345. Yet Dr. Conybeare alleges (p. 20) that I represent Jesus as surrounded by twelve disciples solely because of the twelve signs of the zodiac. The latter item is given simply as an explanation of the calling of the twelve *on a mountain* (412), which Dr. Conybeare finds quite historical.

was shaped to the end of superseding the old, had to provide itself to that extent, by myth, with the same machinery. No step in the myth-theory is better established than this; and no non-miraculous item in the legend is more recalcitrant than the twelve story to the assumptions of the biographical school. The gospel list of the twelve is one of the most unmanageable things in the record. In a narrative destitute of detail where detail is most called for, we get a list of names, most of which count for nothing in the later history, to give a semblance of actuality to an invented institution. We have clearly unhistorical detail as to five, no detail whatever as to further accessions, and then a body of twelve suddenly constituted. For some of us, the discovery of the TEACHING was a definite point of departure in the progression toward the myth-theory; and it supplies us with the firmest starting-point for our theoretic construction of the process by which the organized Christian Church took shape.

#### § 4. *The Process of Propaganda*

On the view here taken, there was at Jerusalem, at some time in the first century, a small group of Jesuist "apostles" among whom the chief may have been named James, John, and Cephas. They *may* have been members of a ritual group of twelve, who may have styled themselves Brothers of the Lord; but that group in no way answered to the Twelve of the gospels. Of the apostle class the number was indefinite. Besides the apostles, further, there would seem to have been an indefinite number of "prophets," indicative of a cult of somewhat long standing. The adherents believed in a non-historic Jesus, the "Servant" of the Jewish God, somehow evolved out of the remote Jesus-God who is reduced



to human status in the Old Testament as Joshua. And their central secret rite consisted in a symbolic sacrament, evolved out of an ancient sacrament of human sacrifice, in which the victim had been the representative of the God, sacrificed to the God, in the fashion of a hundred primitive cults. This rite had within living memory, if not still at the time from which we start, been accompanied by an annual popular rite in which a selected person—probably a criminal released for the purpose—was treated as a temporary king, then derided, and then either in mock show or in actual fact executed, under the name of Jesus Barabbas, “the Son of the Father.”

Of this ancient cult there were inferribly many scattered centres outside of Judea, including probably some in Samaria, the special region of the celebration of the Hero-God Joshua. There was one such group in Ephesus; and probably another at Alexandria, and another at Antioch; Jews of the Dispersion having possibly taken the cult with them. But the cult outside Jewry may have had non-Jewish roots, though it merged with Jewish elements. So long as the Temple at Jerusalem lasted, the small cult counted for very little; and it was probably after the fall of Jerusalem<sup>1</sup> that its leaders added to their machinery the rite of baptism, which the synoptic gospels treat as a specialty of the movement of John the Baptist. Him they represent as a “forerunner” of the Christ, who under divine inspiration recognizes the Messianic claims of Jesus. All this is plainly unhistorical, even on the assumption of the historicity of Jesus.<sup>2</sup> Whatever may be the historic facts as to John

<sup>1</sup> It was probably about the year 80 that the Jewish authorities framed the formula by which they sought to mark off “the Minim” from the Judaic fold.—Herford, *Christianity in Talmud*, pp. 135, 385–7.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Lester (*The Historic Jesus*, p. 84) argues that the baptism of Jesus by John must be historical, since to invent it would be gratuitously



the Baptist, who is a very dubious figure,<sup>1</sup> the marked divergence between the synoptics and the fourth gospel on the subject of baptism<sup>2</sup> show that that rite was not originally Jesuist, but was adopted by the Jesuists as a means of popular appeal.

The recognition of this fact is a test of the critical good faith of those who profess to found on the synoptics for a history of the beginnings of the Jesuist cult. Canon Robinson<sup>3</sup> treats as unquestionably historical one of the contradictory statements in John iv, 1-2, of which the first affirms that Jesus baptized abundantly, while the second, an evidently interpolated parenthesis, asserts that only the disciples baptized, not Jesus. Though this interpolation hinges on the first dictum, the Canon accepts it to the exclusion of that, its basis. But the original writer could not have put the proposition thus had he believed it. What he affirmed was abundant baptizing by Jesus. Of this, however, the synoptics have no more hint than they have of baptizing by the disciples. On any possible view of the composition of the synoptics, it is inconceivable that they should omit all mention of baptizing by Jesus or the disciples if such a practice was affirmed in the early tradition. For them baptism is the institution of the Forerunner, who is mythically represented as hailing in Jesus his successor or supersessor, with no suggestion of a continuance of the rite. If there is to be any critical consistency in the biographical argument, it must at least recognize that baptism is non-Jesuine.

The embodiment of the rite of baptism on the basis of the Baptist's alleged acclamation of Jesus as the Messiah,

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to make him "in a way subordinate to John." But when John is put as the Forerunner, acclaiming the Messiah, where is the subordination?

<sup>1</sup> *C.M.* 396.

<sup>2</sup> *H.J.* 135-6.

<sup>3</sup> *Encyc. Bib.* art. BAPTISM.

either carried with it or followed upon the claim that Jesus, hitherto regarded as a simple Saviour-God, was a Messiah. After the fall of Jerusalem, the old dream of an earthly Messiah who should restore the Kingdom of Judah or Israel <sup>1</sup> was shattered for the vast majority of Jews. Even in the ASSUMPTION OF MOSES, in the main the work of a Quietist Pharisee, written in Hebrew probably between 7 and 29 of the first century,<sup>2</sup> there is a virtual abandonment of Messianism, the task of overthrowing the Gentiles being assigned to "the Most High."<sup>3</sup> In the composite APOCALYPSE OF BARUCH, written in Hebrew, mainly by Pharisaic Jews, in the latter half of the first century, probably as an implicit polemic against early Jesuism,<sup>4</sup> we see the effect of the catastrophe. In the sections written before the fall of Jerusalem, the hope of a Messianic Kingdom is proclaimed; in those written later there is either at most a hope of a Messianic Kingdom without a Messiah or a complete abandonment of mundane expectations.<sup>5</sup> What the Jesuist movement did was to develop, outside of Jewry,<sup>6</sup> the earlier notion of a Messiah "concealed," pre-appointed, and coming from heaven to effect the consummation of all things earthly.<sup>7</sup>

Such Messianism may have either preceded or proceeded-on an adoption of the rite of baptism. Given a resort to Messianism by the Jesuists after the fall of Jerusalem, the alleged testimony of the Baptist to Jesus as the Appointed One might be the first step; and the resort to the baptismal rite would follow on the myth

<sup>1</sup> A temporary Messianic Kingdom is set forth about 100 B.C. in the *Book of Jubilees* (ed. Charles, 1902, introd. p. lxxxvii).

<sup>2</sup> Charles, introd. to the *Assumption of Moses*, 1897, pp. xiii-xiv, liv.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.* pp. xi, 41.

<sup>4</sup> Charles, introd. to the *Apocalypse of Baruch*, 1896, pp. vii-viii.

<sup>5</sup> *Id.* p. lv, and refs. <sup>6</sup> See above, p. 117, n. <sup>7</sup> Above, p. 66.

that Jesus had been actually baptized by John. In Acts, i, 5, Jesus is in effect made to represent John's baptism with water as superseded by a baptism in the Holy Ghost.<sup>1</sup> In the Pauline epistles we have trace of a conflict over this as over other Judaic practices, Paul being made to declare (1 Cor. i, 17) that "Christ sent me not to baptize but to preach the gospel," though he admits having baptized a few.<sup>2</sup> All that is clear is that the Jesuists were not primarily baptizers; that they began to baptize "in the name of Jesus Christ,"<sup>3</sup> with a formula of the Holy Ghost and fire, but really in the traditional manner with water; and that long afterwards they feigned that the Founder had prescribed baptism with a trinitarian formula.<sup>4</sup>

Thus far, the local movement was not only Jewish but Judaic. It may or may not have been before the fall of Jerusalem that a Jesuist "apostle" named Paul conceived the idea of creating by propaganda a new Judæo-Jesuist movement appealing to Gentiles. Such an idea is not the *invention* of Paul or any other Jesuist; the idea of a Messianic Kingdom in which the Gentiles should be saved is found in the Jewish TESTAMENTS OF THE TWELVE PATRIARCHS, written in Hebrew by a Pharisee between the years 109 and 106 B.C.<sup>5</sup> But, thus made current, it might well be adopted by Jesuists. The reason for supposing this to have begun before the year 70 is not merely the tradition to that effect but the fact that in none of the epistles do we have any trace of that "gospel of the Kingdom" which in the synoptics

<sup>1</sup> Cp. Mk. i, 8.

<sup>2</sup> In Hebrews vi, 2, also, baptism appears to be disparaged. But vv. 1-2 are incoherent. Green's translation gives a passable sense: the R.V. does not.

<sup>3</sup> Acts x, 48.

<sup>4</sup> Mt. xxviii, 19. Cp. Mk. xvi, 16.

<sup>5</sup> *Testaments*, ed. Charles, 1908, pp. xvi, 121.

is posited as the evangel of Jesus. That evangel, which is a simple duplication of the alleged evangel of the Baptist, and which we have seen to be wholly mythical, being devoid of possible historic content,<sup>1</sup> is part of the apparatus of the retrospective Messianic claim. But the Pauline Epistles, even as they show no knowledge of the name Nazareth, or Nazaræan, or Nazarene, or of any gospel teaching, also show no concern over a "gospel of the Kingdom." Whether or not, then, they are wholly pseudepigraphic, they suggest that a Paulinism of some kind was an early feature in the Jesuist evolution.

According to the Acts, Paul's name was originally Saul, though no such avowal is ever made in the epistles. The purpose of the statement seems to be to strengthen the case as to his Jewish nationality, which *is* affirmed in the epistles, as is the item that he had been a murderous persecutor of the early Jesuists. All this suggests a late manipulation of the traditions of an early strife. To claim that the Gentilizing apostle had been a Jew born and bred would be as natural on the Gentilizing side as to allege that the typically Judaic Peter had denied his Lord; while the charge of persecuting the infant church would be a not less natural invention of the Judaic Christians who accepted the tradition that Paul had been a Pharisee and a pupil of Gamaliel. In point of fact we find the Ebionites, the typical Judaic Jesuists, knowing him simply as "Paul of Tarsus" in their version of the Acts or in a previous document upon which that founded.<sup>2</sup> And many Jewish scholars have declared that they cannot conceive the Pauline epistles to have been written by a Rabbinically trained Jew.<sup>3</sup> This does not preclude

<sup>1</sup> *H.J.* ch. vi.

<sup>2</sup> Van Manen, as summarized by Mr. Whittaker, *Origins of Christianity*, ed. 1914, p. 78, citing Epiphanius, *Hær.* xxx, 16.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.* pp. 124-5, 199.

the possibility that the original Paul, of whose "few very short epistles" personally penned<sup>1</sup> we have probably nothing left that is identifiable,<sup>2</sup> may have been such a Jew, but the presumption is to the contrary.

On the face of the case, nothing was more natural than that the Jesuist movement should appeal to civilized Gentiles. Judaism itself did so, striving much after proselytes. The question was whether the Jesuist proselytes should be made on a strictly Judaic basis. Now, even if the fall of Jerusalem had not given the impetus to a severance of the cult from the dominating religion, the sacred domicile being gone, it is obvious that an abandonment of such a Jewish bar as circumcision would give the developing cult a great advantage over the other in propaganda among Gentiles. Circumcision must have been a highly repellent detail for Hellenistic Gentiles in general; and a gospel which dispensed with it would have a new chance of making headway. And such a severance certainly took place, though we can put no reliance on the chronology of the Acts.<sup>3</sup> Paul<sup>4</sup> remains a doubtfully dated figure, because the chronology of the whole cult is problematic.

But we can broadly distinguish between a "Petrine" and a "Pauline" Christism. In the Acts (ii, 22-40), which clearly embodies earlier lore, prior to that of the gospels, the Jesus Christ preached by Peter is not represented as a saving sacrifice. As little is he a Teacher, though he is a doer of "mighty works and wonders and signs." If we were to apply the biographical method,

<sup>1</sup> Eusebius, *Eccles. Hist.* iii, 24.

<sup>2</sup> Cp. Van Manen in Whittaker, p. 182.

<sup>3</sup> *E.g.* the dating of the rising of Theudas before the "enrolment" of Luke (6 C.E.); whereas Josephus places it about the year 45.

<sup>4</sup> The reference to "Aretas the King" in 2 Cor. xi, 32, one of the few possible clues in the Epistles, yields no certain date, and indeed creates a crux for the historians. See art. ARETAS in *Encyc. Bib.*



the presentment might be held to indicate the Talmudic Jesus. Only *after* his resurrection "God hath made him both Lord and Christ"—that is, Messiah; and the Jewish hearers are invited to "repent" and be "baptized . . . in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins." Peter's Jesus, like him of the TEACHING, is the "Servant" of God, not his Son. And there is no mention of a sacrament, though there is noted a "breaking of bread at home" (42, 46) recalling the "broken" (bread) of the *Didachê*. The sacrament, then, was apparently a secret rite for the Jewish group.

The speeches, of course, are quite unhistorical: we can but take them as embodying a traditional "Petrine" teaching with later matter. Thus we have baptism figuring as a Jesuist rite, whereas in the synoptics, as we have seen, there had been no such thing. The story of Peter being brought to the pro-Gentile view is pure ecclesiastical myth, probably posterior to the Pauline epistles, which are ignored but counteracted in so far as they posit strife between Pauline and Petrine propaganda. Peter and Paul alike are made to teach that "it behoved the Christ to suffer" (iii, 18; xvii, 3), even as they duplicate their miracles, their escapes, and their sufferings. But while Peter is pretended to have accepted Gentilism, it is Paul who acts on the principle; and he it is who is first represented as fighting pagan polytheism, notably at Ephesus (xix, 26). At Athens, in a plainly fictitious speech, he is made to expound the "unknown God" of an Athenian agnostic cult in terms of Jewish opposition to image-worship, indicating Jesus merely as "a man" raised by God from the dead to judge the world at the judgment day. It is *after* this episode that he is made to tell the Jews of Corinth he will "henceforth go unto the Gentiles." Nevertheless he is made to go on preach-



ing to the Jews. The narrative as a whole is plainly factitious: all we can hope to do is to detect some of its historic data.

Two things must be kept clearly and constantly in view: first, that what we understand by a literary and a historical conscience simply did not exist in the early Christian environment; second, that in all probability the Acts, which to start with would be a blend of tradition and fiction, is much manipulated during a long period. We are not entitled to assume that an "original" writer duplicated the careers of Peter and Paul for purposes of edification. One or more may have wrought one narrative, and a later hand or hands may have systematically interpolated the other.<sup>1</sup> We are to remember further that it was an age in which most Christians, assimilating the eschatology of the Persians and the Jews—the spontaneous dream of crushed peoples—expected the speedy end of the world, and did their thinking on that basis. In such a state of mind, critical thought could not exist save as a small element in religious polemic.

Let us then see what we reach on the hypothesis that early Jesuism even in the first century, and possibly even before the fall of Jerusalem, was running in two different channels—one movement adhering to Jewish usage, making Jesus the Servant of God, and conceiving him as a God-gifted Healer whose death raised him to the status of the Messiah, the promised Christ or Anointed One who should either close the earthly scene or bring about a new God-ruled era *for the Jews*. For the holders of this view, the Kingdom of God was *coming*. Jesus was ere long to come in the clouds in great glory and inaugurate the new life. To ask for clear conceptions on such a

<sup>1</sup> Cp. Van Manen, as cited.

matter from such minds would be idle. There were none. The one idea connected with the mythical evangel was that Jews should repent and prepare for the new life. To that elusive minimum the latest biographical analysis, assuming the historicity, reduces the "ministry" of the gospel Jesus.<sup>1</sup> The rest is all post-apostolic accretion. On the other hand, the Petrine Jesus has proved his mission for his devotees, first and last, by miracles, and by his resurrection—things which the biographical school rejects as imaginary.

Upon this movement there enters an innovator, Paul of Tarsus. Round him, as round Peter, there are clouds of myth. That he was originally Saul, a Pharisee, a pupil of Gamaliel; that he began as a bitter persecutor of the Jesuists; and that he was converted by a supernatural vision, become common data for the church. That the charge of persecution was a Judaic figment, on the other hand, is perhaps as likely as that the story of Peter's denial of his Master was a Gentile figment. We are in a world of purposive fiction. But the broad divergence of doctrine seems to underlie all the fables. Saul, on the later view, changes his Jewish name to the Grecian Paul when he plans to make the Jesus-cult non-Jewish, using the tactic of monotheism against pagan polytheism in general, in the very act of adding a Son-God to the Jewish Father-God, as so many Son-Gods had been added to Father-Gods throughout religious history. To the early Jewish Jesuists, the notion of the Son had been given by the old cult of sacrifice, with its Jesus the Son—an idea obscurely but certainly present, as we have seen, in the lore of the Talmudists.

Clearly it was the Pauline movement that made of Christism a "viable" world religion. As an unorganized

<sup>1</sup> *H.J.* 199-203.

Saviour-cult it would have died out like others. As a phase of Judaism, it could have had no Jewish permanence, simply because its Messianism was a matter of looking daily for an "end of the world" that did not come. After two centuries of waiting, the Jews would have had as clear a right to pronounce Jesus a "false Messiah" as they had in the case of Barcohab or any other before or since. The mere belief in a future life, at one time excluded from their Sacred Books, had become the common faith, only the aristocratic Sadducees (probably not all of them) rejecting it. On that side, Jesuism gave them nothing. Well might Paul "turn to the Gentiles"—albeit not under the circumstances theologically imagined for him in the book of Acts.

Even for the Gentiles, Jesuism was but one of many competing cults, offering similar attractions. In the religions of Adonis, Attis, Isis and Osiris, Dionysos, Mithra, and the Syrian Marnas ("the Lord, a variant of Adonis=Adonai, one of the Jews' exoteric names for Yahweh"), a resplendent ever-youthful God who had died to rise again was sacramentally adored, mourned for, and rejoiced over, by devotees just as absorbed in their faith as were the Jesuists. With vague pretences of biographical knowledge, to which nobody now attaches any credence, they were as sure of the historicity of their Vegetation-Gods and Sun-Gods as the Christists were of the actuality of theirs. Had a Frazer of the second century told them that their Adonis and Attis were but abstractions of the annual sacrificial victim of old time, they would have told him, in the manner of Festus (not yet obsolete), that much learning had made him mad. They "knew" that their Redeemer had lived, died, and risen again. The unbelief of philosophers, or of scoffers like Lucian, affected them no more than scientific and

critical unbelief to-day disturbs the majority of unthinking Christians. The busy sacrificial and devotional life of Hierapolis would be as little affected by Lucian's tranquil exhibition of it as the life at Lourdes has been by Zola's novel. On that side, we can very easily understand the past by the present.

So little psychic or intellectual difference was there between Jesuism and the other "isms" that Paul's propaganda made no measurable sensation in the colluvies of the Roman empire. As Renan avows, even on the assumption of the genuineness of the Epistles, he was the missionary of a number of small conventicles, all convinced that they alone were the "true Church of God upon earth." It is an error of perspective to ascribe extraordinary faculty to the missionary who either converted or "stablished" such believers; and it is plainly unnecessary to assume in his case any abnormal sincerity or persuasiveness. If we were to estimate him in terms of the records we should describe him either as a *halluciné* or as a fanatic who had shed Christian blood in his Judaic stage and never in the least learned humility on that score, his phrases of contrition being balanced by the fiercest asperities towards all who withstood him in his Christian stage. But we have no right to draw a portrait of "Paul," who is left to us a composite of literary figments testifying only to the previous activity of a propagandist so-named.

One conclusion, however, holds alike whether or not we accept any of the epistles as genuine: or rather, the more we lean on the epistles the more it holds: Paul had no concern about the life, teachings, or "personality" of his Jesus.<sup>1</sup> His Jesus, be it said once more, is a speechless abstraction. One of the strangest fallacies

<sup>1</sup> Cp. Schmiedel, art. GOSPELS in *Encyc. Bib.* col. 1890.

in the procedure of the biographical school is the assumption that the acceptance of the epistles as genuine involves the admission of the historicity of the Founder. In actual fact, it was a belief in the substantial genuineness of the main epistles that first strengthened the present writer in his first surmises of the non-historicity of the entire gospel record ; just as a perception of the historical situation broadly set forth in Judges confirms doubt as to the historicity of the record of the Hexateuch. The two will not consist. On the other hand, Van Manen, who had previously been troubled about the historicity of Jesus, was positively set at rest on that score when he reached the conclusion that all the Paulines were supposititious. This happened simply because he had scientifically covered the field only on the Pauline side : had he applied equivalent tests to the gospels, he would have reached there too a verdict of fabrication. There is strictly no absolute *sequitur* in such a case. The myth-theory is neither made nor marred by the rejection of the Paulines.

Even those who cannot realize the indifference of " Paul " to all personal records of his Jesus—or, recognizing it, are content to explain it away by formulas—must see on consideration that belief in a Saviour God no more needed biographical basis in the case of Paul than in the case of the priests of Mithra, who, it may be noted, had a strong centre at Tarsus.<sup>1</sup> There is a certain plausibility in the argument that only a great personality could have made possible the belief in the Resurrection story—though that too is fallacy—but there is no plausibility in inferring that a conception of a personality he had never personally known was needed to impel Paul to *his* evangel, which is simply one of future salvation by divine sacrifice for all who believe. That is the

<sup>1</sup> *P.C.* 316 n.



substitution made by Gentile Christism for the miscarrying Messianism of the Petrine doctrine. It was probably the normal doctrine of many pagan cults—Mithraism for one, which for three hundred years, by common consent, was the outstanding rival of Christianity in the Roman empire.<sup>1</sup> It was, then, no specialty of dogma that ultimately determined the success of the one and the disappearance of the other. It was a concatenation of real or “external” causes, not a peculiarity of mere belief.

### § 5. *Real Determinants*

The more we study comparatively the fortunes of the Christian and the rival cults, the more difficult it is to conceive that it made headway in virtue of sheer monotheism. If we assume that Judaism had made its proselytes in the pagan world by reason of the appeal made by its monotheism to the more thoughtful minds, we are bound to infer that Christism was on that side rather at a disadvantage, inasmuch as it was really adding a new deity, with a “Holy Spirit” superadded, to the God of the Jews.

But the ordinary argument as to the vogue of “pure monotheism” at any time is in the main a series of traditional assumptions. For the more thoughtful of the ancients, polytheism was always tending to pass into monotheism. We see the process going on in the Vedas, in Brahmanism, in the Egyptian system, in the Babylonian—to say nothing of the Greek.<sup>2</sup> It proceeded partly by way of henotheism—the tendency to exalt any particular deity as *the* deity: partly by way of the compelled surmise that all the deities of the popular

<sup>1</sup> *P.C.* 281.

<sup>2</sup> See *S.H.F.*, chs. iii and v; and cp. Whittaker, *Priests, Philosophers, and Prophets*, 1911.



creeds were but aspects or names of one all-controlling Power. Wherever creeds *met*, the more thoughtful were driven to ask themselves whether the heavens could be a mere reflex of the earth, with every nation represented by its special God; and to fuse the national Gods into one was but a step to fusing the Gods of the various natural forces into one. Since religions became organized, there must always have been monotheists, as there must always have been unbelievers.

Nevertheless, polytheism is just as surely popular as monotheism is inevitable to the more thoughtful who remain "religious" in the natural sense of the term. One of the great delusions maintained by the acceptance of the falsified history of Judaism and the conventional religion of the Bible is the notion that the Jews were a specially monotheistic people. They were not.<sup>1</sup> They were originally tribalists like their neighbours, holding by a tribal God and a hierarchy of inferior Gods. To this day we are seriously told that Abraham made a new departure as a monotheist. Abraham is a mythical patriarch, himself once a deity; and the deity represented to have been believed in by Abraham is a tribal God. And not even the tribal God was monotheistically worshipped. The Sacred Books are one long chain of complaints against the Israelites for their perpetual resort to "strange Gods"—and Goddesses.<sup>2</sup>

Two brilliant French scholars have advanced the thesis that this alleged polytheism is imaginary;<sup>3</sup> and that the Israelites in the mass always worshipped only the One God Yahweh.<sup>4</sup> But this position, which is grounded

<sup>1</sup> *P.C.* 67 sq.

<sup>2</sup> *S.H.F.* ch. iv.

<sup>3</sup> First put by M. Maurice Vernes, *Du prétendu polythéisme des Hébreux*, 1891.

<sup>4</sup> See *The Source of the Christian Tradition*, by E. Dujardin: Eng. trans. R.P.A., p. 32; and the citations from MM. Vernes and Dujardin in Mr. Whittaker's *Priests, Philosophers, and Prophets*, 1911, pp. 124-127.

on the inference that the mass of the historical and prophetic literature is post-exilic, outgoes its own grounds. Even if we assume, with the theorists, that Jewish monotheism was universalist from the moment it took shape as monotheism in literature,<sup>1</sup> we get rid neither of the question of pre-exilic polytheism nor of that of popular survival. To say that the post-exilic Jews are "the only Jews known to history," and that the apparently old lore in Genesis is "perhaps really the most modern," being invented for purposes of parable, is only a screening of the fact that the Hebrews evolved religiously like other peoples. A resort to alien Gods is seen to be universal in the religious history of the ancient world. Every conquered race was suspected to have secret power in respect of "the God of the land"<sup>2</sup>; and wherever races mixed, cults mixed. It is only on a provision of special Sacred Books, themselves treated as fetishes, that the attractions of alien cults can be repelled; and not even Sacred Books can make real monotheists of an uncultured majority. Even later Judaism, with its angels, its Metatron, its Satan, was never truly monotheistic.<sup>3</sup> Islam is not. The universalism which in later Judaism still commonly passes for a specialty of the Hebrew mind was really an assimilation and development of Perso-Babylonian ideas;<sup>4</sup> and Satan made a dualism of the Jewish creed even as Ahriman did of the Persian.

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Whittaker (p. 128) puts the view that Jewish monotheism was really a reduction of the universalist monotheism of the Mesopotamian priesthoods to the purposes of a nationalist God-cult.

<sup>2</sup> *S.H.F.* i, 44-46.

<sup>3</sup> Even Dean Inge avows that "The distinctive feature of the Jewish religion is not, as is often supposed, its monotheism. Hebrew religion in its golden age was monolatry rather than monotheism; and when Jehovah became more strictly the only God, the cult of intermediate beings came in, and restored a quasi-polytheism."—Art. "St. Paul" in *Quarterly Review*, Jan. 1914, p. 54.

<sup>4</sup> See, however, the contrary thesis maintained by Dr. A. Causse, *Les Prophètes d'Israel et les religions de l'orient*, 1913.

In the Romanized world, Judaism had never a really great success of proselytism, just because the more cultured had their own monotheism, and had in Greek literature something more satisfactory than the Hebraic, with its barbaric basis of racialism and its apparatus of circumcision, synagogues and Sabbaths. The proselytes were made in general among the less cultured—not the populace, but the serious men of religious predilections, who were the more impressed by the Sacred Books as rendered in the Septuagint because they were not at home in the higher literature of Greece. And if Judaism could not sweep the Roman empire in virtue of monotheism, Christism could not, especially while it lacked sacred books of its own.

Professor Smith's thesis of a rapid monotheistic triumph is partly founded on his own vivid interpretation of many of the gospel stories of cast-out demons and diseases as a symbolism for successes against polytheism. And his symbolistic interpretation, which is at first sight apt to seem arbitrary, is really important at many points, accounting as it does convincingly for a number of gospel stories. But if we are to assume that *all* the gospel stories of casting out devils, curing lepers, healing the lame, and giving sight to the blind, were *composed* with a symbolic intent, we shall still be left asking on what grounds the Name of Jesus made any popular appeal before and after the symbolizing gospels were compiled.

Professor Smith draws a powerful picture of the relief given by monotheism to polytheists. In his eloquent words, the "tyranny of demons" had "trodden down humanity in dust and mire since the first syllable of recorded time"; and the new proclamation "roused a world, dissolved the fetters of the tyrannizing demons, set free the prisoners of superstition, poured light upon

the eyes of the blind, and called a universe to life.”<sup>1</sup> But let us be clear as to the facts. If by “demons” we understand the *Gods* of the heathen, there was really no more “bondage” under polytheism than under monotheism. Spiritual bondage can be and is set up by the fear of One God who is supposed to meddle actively with all life;<sup>2</sup> and the Jewish law was in itself notoriously an intellectual and social bondage. It is expressly represented as such in the Pauline epistles. If again we have regard to the fear of “evil spirits,” there was really no difference between Jew and Gentile, for the “superstition” of the Jew in those matters was unbounded.<sup>3</sup> Nor is there any ground for thinking that the Jew had more confidence than other people in divine protection from the spirits of evil.

In what respect, then, are we to suppose Jesuist monotheism to have been an innovation? The argument seems to require that Jesuism delivered the polytheist from belief in the *existence* either of his daimon Gods or of his evil spirits. But obviously it negated neither of these. Daimons of all sorts are constantly presupposed in Jesuist polemic. The “freedom in Christ” proffered to Jews and Gentiles by the Pauline evangel is, in the terms of the case, not a freedom from the terrors of polytheism as such. It was certainly not regarded as a freedom from “demons,” for exorcism against demons was a standing function in the early church for centuries; and the fear of a demon or demons is implicit in the “Lord’s Prayer.” What is proffered is primarily a freedom from the Jewish ceremonial law, and secondarily a freedom from fear in respect of the judgment-day and the future

<sup>1</sup> *Ecce Deus*, pp. 71, 75.

<sup>2</sup> Cp. Whittaker, *Priests, Philosophers, and Prophets*, p. 45.

<sup>3</sup> Cp. *Supernatural Religion*, ch. iv.

life, the divine sacrifice having taken away all sin. We are told by eloquent missionaries in our own day <sup>1</sup> that the Christian doctrine gives a new sense of freedom and security to negroes, in particular to the women; though we also learn on the other hand that where the two religions can compete freely Islam makes the stronger claim in respect of its exclusion of the race bar which Christianity always sets up in the rear of its evangel. But here, if the fear of evil spirits is really cast out, it is by a *modern* doctrine of their non-existence, not found in the New Testament, but generated by modern science.

Whatever preaching of monotheism, then, entered into early Jesuism, it gave no deliverance from belief in evil spirits: rather it added to their number by turning good daimons into bad. What is more, there enters into Christian polemic at a fairly early stage a use of the terms "God" and "Gods" for the "saints" which is on all fours with the common language of Paganism; <sup>2</sup> and this is a much more common note than the "high" monotheism of the Apology of Aristides, which has hardly any Christian characteristics. His monotheism is rather Pagan than Christian. The broad fact remains that so far as we can know the early Jesuist polemic from the gospels, the Acts, the Epistles, the Apocalypse, or the patristic literature, it was not a wide and successful assault on polytheism *as such* by an appeal to monotheistic instinct, but just a proffer to Jews and Gentiles of a kind of creed common enough in the pagan world, its inconsistent monotheism appealing only to a minority of the recipients.<sup>3</sup> The very miracle-stories which

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.* Art. in *The Atlantic Monthly*, Nov. 1916, p. 605.

<sup>2</sup> Cp. J. A. Farrer, *Paganism and Christianity*, R.P.A. rep. pp., 19-20; Dr. J. E. Carpenter, *Phases of Early Christianity*, 1916, p. 57 sq.

<sup>3</sup> It may be argued that the really swift triumph of Islam in a later age goes to support Professor Smith's thesis. But the triumph of Islam was primarily military. And Islam too kept its cortège of "demons."



Professor Smith interprets as allegories of monotheistic propaganda became part of the popular appeal as soon as they were made current in documents ; and they *appealed* (he will admit) as miracle-stories, not as allegories. Peter and Paul in their turn are represented as working miracles of healing. It was all finally part of the appeal to primary religious credulity.

Of two positions, then, we must choose one. Either the miracle-stories of the gospels, and by consequence those of the Acts, were as such otiose inventions for an audience which, on the view under discussion, would have been much more responsive to an explicit claim of *triumph over polytheistic beliefs*, the thing they are said to have been most deeply concerned about, or the miracle stories in general were meant as miracle-stories, only some later symbolists seeking to impose a symbolic sense on the records along with the Gnostic conception that the Christ had spoken in allegories which the people were not *meant* to understand. This later manipulation undoubtedly did take place. The parable of the Rich One, as Professor Smith convincingly shows, is an allegory of Jew and Gentile—the Rich One being Israel. But it is not by such manipulation that cults are made popular, congregations collected, and revenue secured. And it was on these practical lines that Christianity was “*stablished*.”

The factors which made this one Eastern cult gradually gain ground, and finally hold its ground, as against the many rival cults, were—

1. The system of *ecclesiæ*, modelled at once on the Jewish synagogue and the pagan *collegia*.

2. The practice of mutual help, making the churches Friendly Societies—again an assimilation of common pagan practice.

3. The *colligation* of the churches, primarily by means of a new sacred literature of gospels and epistles, and secondarily by a system of centralized government, partly modelled on the imperial system.

4. The backing of the new Christian Sacred Books by the Jewish Sacred Books, giving an ancient Eastern background and basis for the faith in a world in which Eastern religious elements were progressively overriding the Western, which had in comparison no documentary basis.

5. The giving to the whole process a relatively democratic character, again after the model of the Jewish system, wherein the people had their main recognition as human beings with rights. Thus Christianity was at once a "secret society" under an autocracy, as were so many Hellenistic religious groups, drawing members as such societies always do in autocratically governed States,<sup>1</sup> and a popular movement as contrasted with Mithraism, which always remained a mere secret society, whence its easy ultimate suppression by the Christianized government.

6. It was the wide ramification and popular importance of the Christian system that at length made it worth the while of the emperor to cease persecuting it as a partly anti-imperial organization and to turn it into an imperial instrument by making it the religion of the State.

To explain the process as the morally deserved success of a religion superior from the start, in virtue of the superiority of its nominal Founder, would be to adhere to pre-scientific conceptions of causation, akin to the geocentric assumption in astronomy. Hierology ultimately merges in sociology, as mythology and anthropology (in the English limitation of the term) merge in hierology; and sociology is a study of the reaction of environments as

<sup>1</sup> E.g. in modern China.

well as of the action of institutions and doctrines. The Christian success was finally achieved by the assimilation of all manner of pagan modes of attraction on the side of creed, and the absolute ultimate subordination of the specialties of early Christian ethic to the business of political adaptation.

And to all attempts to obscure the problem by figuring Christianity as a continuously beneficent and purifying force it is sufficient here to answer that it is in strict fact a religious variant which survived in a decaying civilization, a politically and socially decaying world; that it lent itself to that decay; and that it did less than nothing to avert it.

Where superior hostile power efficiently fought it, it was suppressed just as it suppressed the organized cults of paganism and some (not all) of its own heretical sects. Its further survival, which does not here properly concern us, was but a matter of the renewed "triumph" of an organized over unorganized religions, and of the adoption of that organization by the new barbaric States as before by the declining Roman empire.

## CHAPTER V

### ORGANIZATION AND ECONOMICS

#### § 1. *The Economic Side*

It is important to realize in some detail the operation of the economic factor in particular, and of organization in general, before we try to grasp synthetically the total process of documentary and doctrinal construction. The former is somewhat sedulously ignored in ordinary historiography, by reason of a general unwillingness even among rationalists to seem to connect mercenary motives with religious beginnings; and of the general assumption among religionists that "true" or "early" religion operates in spite of, in defiance or in independence of and not by aid of, economic motives. No one will dispute that the history of the Roman Catholic Church is one of economic as well as doctrinal action and reaction, or that Protestantism from the first was in large measure an economic process. But it is commonly assumed, at least implicitly, that "primitive" religion, religion "in the making," is not at all an affair of economic motive or reaction.

Those who have at all closely studied primitive religious life know that this is not so.<sup>1</sup> The savage medicine-man is up to his lights as keenly concerned about his economic interest as were the priests of ancient Babylon and Egypt—to take instances that can hardly give modern offence.<sup>2</sup> And to say this is not to say that the "religion" involved

<sup>1</sup> *P.C.* 62-63.

<sup>2</sup> *S.H.F.* i, 34, 72.

is insincere, in the case of the savage or the pagan any more than in that of the modern ecclesiastic or missionary. It is merely to say that religion has always its economic side, and that faith may go with economic self-seeking as easily as with self-sacrifice. I at least am not prepared to say that when the Franciscans in general passed from the state of voluntary poverty to that of corporate wealth they ceased to be sincere believers; or that a bishop is necessarily less pious than a Local Preacher.

I have seen, in Egypt, the life of a Moslem "saint" in the making. He fasted much, certainly never eating more than one meal a day, and he was visibly emaciated and feeble as a result of his abstinences. Over his devout neighbours he had an immense influence. To his religious addresses they listened with rapt reverence; and when once in my presence he gave to a young man a religious charm to cure his sick sister, in the shape of a cigarette paper inscribed with a text from the Koran and rolled up to be swallowed, the youth's face was transfigured with joyous faith, his eyes shining as if he had seen a glorious vision. I have not seen more radiant faith, in or out of "Israel." And the saint, all the same, took unconcealed satisfaction in showing privately the heavy purse of gold he had recently collected from his faithful. To call him insincere would be puerile. I believe him to have been as sincere as Luther or Loyola. He simply happened, like so many Easterns and Westerns, to combine the love of pelf with the love of God.

If I am told there were no such men among the early Jesuits or Christian propagandists, I answer that if there had not been the cult would not have gone very far. Of course the records minimize the economic side. In the gospels we are told that Judas carried "the bag," but never anything of what he got to put in it. But in



the Acts, the economic factor obtrudes itself even in myth. A picture is there drawn (ii, 44), for the edification of later Christians, of the first community as having "all things common"—a statement which we have no reason to believe true of any ancient Christian community whatever—unless in the "pre-apostolic" period.<sup>1</sup> The picture never recurs, in the apostolic history or elsewhere. And the purpose of edification is unconsciously turned to the account of revelation. Of the faithful it is represented that they "sold their possessions and goods and parted them to all, according as any man had need." The assertion is reiterated (iv, 34) to the extent of alleging that all who had houses or lands sold all, bringing the proceeds to the apostles for distribution "according as any one had need." Among these having need would certainly be the "apostles."

Soon one of the faithful, Joseph surnamed Barnabas, "a Levite, a man of Cyprus by race," is held up to honour for that "having a field," he "sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet." Then comes the story of Ananias and Sapphira, who, or at least the former, have ever since supplied Christendom with its standing name for the fraudulent liar. The sin of Ananias consisted in his not having given the apostles the *whole* price of a possession he had voluntarily sold for behoof of the community. There could be no more striking instance of the power of ecclesiastical ethic to paralyse the general moral sense. Ananias in the legend was giving liberally, but not liberally enough to satisfy the apostle, who accordingly denounces him as sinning against the Holy Ghost,<sup>2</sup> and

<sup>1</sup> Cp. Weizsäcker, *The Apostolic Age*, Eng. trans. i, 55. It is just possible that among people devoutly awaiting the imminent end of the world, some such communions might have a brief existence.

<sup>2</sup> A good support to Hobbes's thesis that *the sin against the Holy Ghost is sin against the ecclesiastical power*.

miraculously slays him for his crime. One might have supposed that no Christian reader, remembering that the ultra-righteous apostle, in the previous sacrosanct record, had just before been represented as basely denying his Lord, could fail to be struck with shame and horror by the savage recital. But of such shame and horror I cannot recall one Christian avowal. And we are to remember that the devout recipients of that recital are assumed to have been the ideal Christian converts.

Soon the twelve are made to explain (vi, 2-4) to the growing "multitude of the disciples" that "it is not fit that we should forsake the word of God, and serve tables. Look ye out . . . seven men of good report, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will continue stedfastly in prayer, and in the ministry of the word." From the date of that writing the apostle and his successors could claim to be worthy of their hire, though they had long to squabble for it. In the early Jesuist additions to the TEACHING we see how the issue was raised. At first (xi) there is a succession of wandering apostles or "prophets." Every apostle is to be received "as the Lord; but he shall not remain [except for ?] one day; if however there be need, then the next [day]; but if he remain three days, he is a false prophet. But when the apostle departeth, let him take nothing except bread enough till he lodge [again]; but if he ask money, he is a false prophet." That is the first stage, probably quite Judaic.

The next section (xii) still adheres broadly to the same view. Every entrant must work for his living. "If he will not act according to this, he is a Christmonger (*χριστέμπορός*)." Evidently there were already Christmongers. But in chapter xiii the primitive stage has been passed, and there is systematic enactment of

economic provision for the installed prophet or teacher as such :—

But every true prophet who will *settle* among you is worthy of his food. Likewise a true teacher, he also is worthy, like the workman, of his food. Every first-fruit, then, of the produce of wine-press and threshing-floor, of oxen and of sheep, thou shalt take and give to the prophets: for they are your high-priests. But if ye have no prophet, give [it] to the poor. If thou makest a baking of bread, take the first [of it] and give according to the commandment. In like manner when thou openest a jar of wine or oil, take the first [of it] and give to the prophets; and of money and clothing and every possession, take the first, as may seem right to thee, and give according to the commandment.

This economic development, too, may have been Jewish, as it was heathen.<sup>1</sup> It is certainly also Christian. The “prophets” are represented in the Acts (xi, 27) as at work already in the days of Claudius; and they were an established class at the time of the writing of First Corinthians (xii, 28), standing next to “apostles” and above “teachers.” That passage is obviously post-Pauline, if we are to think of Paul as spending only a few years in his eastern propaganda. But the prophets are ostensibly numerous in the earliest days of the church,<sup>2</sup> and seem to have subsisted alongside of “apostles” at the outset. All along they must have found some subsistence: in time they are “established.” The eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth sections of the TEACHING, which are our best evidence of the progression, show a gradual triumph of the economic factor, registering itself in the additions. The fifteenth section divides in two parts, an economic and an ethical, the economic coming first :—

<sup>1</sup> *S.H.C.* 70.

<sup>2</sup> Cp. Acts xiii, 1; xv, 32; Rev. xvi, 6; xviii, 20, 24.

Now elect for yourselves bishops and deacons worthy of the Lord, men meek and not avaricious, and upright and proved; for they too render you the service of the prophets and the teachers. Therefore neglect them not; for they are the ones who are honoured of you, together with the prophets and teachers.

It was for a community thus supporting various classes of teachers and preachers, first poorly and primitively, later in an organized fashion, that the gospels were built up and the epistles composed.

### § 2. *Organization*

Organization, which in our days has become "a word to conjure with," is no new factor in human life. It is the secret of survival for communities and institutions; and the survival of Christism in its competition with other cults must be traced mainly to the early process of adaptation. That, however, takes place in terms of three concurrent factors: (1) the appeal made by the cult which is the ground of association; (2) the practice of the community as regards the relations of members; (3) the administration, as regards propaganda, expansion and co-ordination of groups. And it is through primary adaptations in respect of the first and second, with a constant stimulus from the third, that the Christian Church can be seen to have succeeded in the struggle for existence. That is to say, it is in the element in which conscious organization is most prominent as distinct from usage or tradition that the determining influence chiefly lies.

The writer who in England was the first to take a comparatively scientific view of church organization from the ecclesiastical side, the late Dr. Edwin Hatch, puts in the forefront of his survey "the preliminary assumption that, as matter of historical research, the

facts of ecclesiastical history do not differ in kind from the facts of civil history.”<sup>1</sup> For those who see in the religion itself a processus of natural social history, this assumption is a matter of course; but the ecclesiastical recognition of the fact is an important step; and the churchman’s analysis of the process is doubly serviceable in that he keeps the study avowedly separate from that of the evolution of doctrine. What he could not have supplied on scientific lines without falling into heresy, the rationalist can supply for himself.

As our historian recognizes, the Christian movement in the Eastern Empire had from the outset a strong basis in the democratic spirit which it derived alike from Jewish and from Hellenistic example. In the day of universal autocracy, social life lay more and more in the principles of voluntary association; and the first Christian churches were but instances of an impulse seen in operation on all sides. In the Jewish environment, the synagogue; in the Hellenistic the *ecclesia* or private association, were everywhere in evidence. Greek religious associations—*thiasoi*, *eranoi*, *orgeones*—were but types of the prevailing impetus to find in voluntary organized groups a substitute for the democratic life of the past.<sup>2</sup> Whereas the older associations for the promotion of special worships were limited to male free citizens, the new admitted foreigners, slaves, and women. Besides religious associations there were a multitude of others which had the double aspect of clubs and friendly societies; trade guilds existed “among almost every kind of workmen in almost every town in the empire:”<sup>3</sup> and burial clubs, dining clubs, financial societies, and friendly societies met other social needs.

<sup>1</sup> Bampton Lectures on *The Organization of the Early Christian Churches*, 3rd. ed. 1888, p. ix.

<sup>2</sup> *E.S.* 113–115.

<sup>3</sup> Hatch, 26. Cp. his Hibbert Lectures, p. 291 sq.



Almost every society, however, had its tutelary divinity, "in the same way as at the present day similar associations on the continent of Europe"—as in England before the Reformation—"invoke the name of a patron saint; and their meetings were sometimes called by a name which was afterwards consecrated to Christian uses—that of a 'sacred synod.'" <sup>1</sup> In many of them "religion was, beyond this, the basis and bond of union. . . . Then, as now, many men had two religions, that which they professed and that which they believed; for the former there were temples and State officials and public sacrifices; for the latter there were associations; and in these associations, as is shown from extant inscriptions, divinities whom the State ignored had their priests, their chapels, and their ritual." <sup>2</sup>

The Christists, then, when they began to form groups, were doing what a swarm of other movements did. Their *ecclesiae* were called by a pagan name, as were the Jewish synagogues. Two things it behoved them to do if they were collectively to gain ground and outlive or out-top the rest: they must multiply in membership, and they must co-ordinate their groups; and both things they did on lines of common action. Membership was from the first promoted by the simplest of all methods, systematic almsgiving to poor adherents; a practice long before initiated by the Jewish synagogues and to this day fixed among them. Given the basis of free association, the inculcated duty of almsgiving, the eastern belief in its saving virtue,<sup>3</sup> and the special Christian belief in the speedy end of the world, the problem of membership was early solved. The poor, helped one day, would themselves

<sup>1</sup> *Id. Organization*, 28.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* 28; Foucart, as there cited.

<sup>3</sup> As Hatch notes, p. 35, Clemens Romanus (ii, 16) echoes Tobit, xii, 8, 9, as to the blessedness of almsgiving. Cp. his citations from Lactantius, Chrysostom, and the Apostolical Constitutions.

help the next, as is their human way in all ages; and in an age of general poverty, the result of an autocratic fiscal system in the Empire as afterwards in the Turkish Empire which in the East took its place, such mutual sympathy constituted a broad social basis of corporate existence.

For our ecclesiastical historian, the poverty is the main determinant on the side of early organization. With a note of profound pessimism, which alternates strangely with passages of professional eulogy of the Church, he notes that pauperism and philanthropy were going hand in hand already throughout the Empire before the advent of Christianity, rich men and municipalities proclaiming an "almost Christian sentiment" on the subject. "The instinct of benevolence was fairly roused. And yet to the mass of men life was hardly worth living. It tended to become a despair."<sup>1</sup> And he claims that the Christian practice of almsgiving—which he knows to have been warmly inculcated among the Jews, as it has always been in Eastern countries—was one of the conservative forces that "arrested decay. They have prevented the disintegration, and possibly the disintegration by a vast and ruinous convulsion, of the social fabric. Of those forces the primitive bishops and deacons were the channels and the ministers. . . . They bridged over the widening interval between class and class. They lessened to the individual soul the weight of that awful sadness of which, then as now, to the mass of men, life was the synonym and the sum."<sup>2</sup>

The generalization as to the widening of the interval between classes is hardly borne out by the evidence; and the pessimism of the last sentence partly defeats the argument, by putting the life of the early Christian period

<sup>1</sup> Hatch, p. 35.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* p. 35.

on the same general level with that of to-day and of all the time between. The true summary would be that in that age the springs of social life were lamed by the suppression of all national existence; that the rule of Rome tended to general impoverishment in respect of a vicious system of taxation; and that the subject peoples, deprived of the old impulses to collective energy, at once turned more and more to private association and became ready to believe in a coming "end of the world" which in some way was to mean a new life. And as the Church's doctrine was pre-eminentely one of salvation in that new life, it behoved it in every way to resort to propaganda while maintaining the eleemosynary system which gave it a broad basis of membership. Thus the organization which controlled the simple financial system must also have regard to the spread of doctrine. And for the means of spreading doctrine, again, as we have already noted, the cue was obviously given by Judaism, which stood out from all religious systems in the Roman world as a religion of Sacred Books. Sacred Books of its own the Jesuist movement must have if it was to hold its own against the prestige of the Jewish Bible. The production of Sacred Books, then, was a task which devolved upon the organizers of the Christian *ecclesiæ* throughout the Eastern Empire, equally with the task of co-ordination, of which, in fact, it was a main part. A common religious literature was the basis of Jewish cohesion. Only by means of a common religious literature could Christism cohere.

No literature, indeed, could avert schism. Schism and strife are among the first notes sounded in the epistles; and a religion which aimed at dogmatic teaching, as against the purely liturgical practice of the old pagan cults, was bound to multiply them. Judaism itself was divided into antagonistic groups of Pharisees, Sadducees,

and Scribes, to say nothing of the Zealots, the Essenes, and other diverging groups. But sects do not destroy a religion any more than parties destroy a State; and the way of success for Christism was a way which, while it involved a multiplication of schism so long as the voluntary basis remained, made a growing aggregate which was at least a unity as having a special creed, distinct from all competing with it.

Thus the Christian movement was doubly a copy and competitor of Judaism, upon whose books it primarily founded. As the dispersed Jewish synagogues were co-ordinated from Jerusalem by the High Priest, and later from Tiberias by the Patriarch, by means of Twelve Apostles and possibly by a subordinate grade of seventy-two collectors who brought in the contributions of the faithful scattered among the Gentiles, so the Jesuists, beginning with an organization centred in Jerusalem and likewise aiming at the collection of funds for which almsgiving in Jerusalem was the appealing pretext, were bound after the fall of the Temple to aim at a centralization or centralizations of their own. A literature became more and more necessary if the new faith was to extend. That was the way at once to glorify the new Hero-God and to multiply his devotees. And it would seem to have been from the starting-point of the Jewish TEACHING OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES that the new departure on one line was made.

To say who, or what class in the new organization, began the evolution, seems impossible in the present state of our knowledge. The point at which the Christist organization in course of time most noticeably diverges from the Jewish model is in the creation and aggrandisement of the *episcopos*, the bishop, a title and a function borrowed from the pagan societies. These had officials called *epimeletai* (superintendents) and *episcopoi*, whose function it was

to receive funds and dispense alms.<sup>1</sup> The early Christists adopted the latter title, and constituted for each group a single official so named, who as president of the assembly received the offerings of donors and was personally responsible for their distribution. This is not the place to trace the effects of the institution in the general development of the churches. It must suffice to note that while in their *presbyters* these preserved the democratic element which they had derived from Judaism and which gave them their social foundation, their creation of a supreme administrator, whose interest it was always to increase the influence of his church by increasing his own, gave them a special source of strength in comparison with the Judaic system.<sup>2</sup>

For the dispersed Jews, held by a racial tie, association was a matter of course. Marked off by religion if not by aspect from Gentiles everywhere, they were a community within the Gentile community. For the first Jesuists, association was not thus a matter of course all round. For the slaves, seeking friendship, and the poor, seeking help, it may have been; but the more prosperous were for that very reason less spontaneously attracted. The fundamental tie was the so-called "Eucharist," which at first, in varying forms, was probably only an annual rite: the *agapae* or love feasts were common to the multitude of pagan associations. Accordingly many adherents tended to "forsake the assembling of themselves together,"<sup>3</sup> and it was plainly the function of the bishop to act upon these. Not only the Epistle to the Hebrews and that of Jude but those of Barnabas and Ignatius, and THE SHEPHERD of Hermas, anxiously or sternly urge the duty of regular meeting. Addresses by bishops and "prophets" would be natural means of promoting the end.

Who then produced the literature? Once more, there

<sup>1</sup> Hatch, p. 37.

<sup>2</sup> S.H.C. 87 sq.

<sup>3</sup> Hatch, 29.



is no evidence. If any of the Epistles might at first sight seem "genuine," they are those ascribed to James and Jude, essentially Judaic or Judaistic documents, especially the former, in which (ii, 1) the cumbrous formula "the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ of glory" exhibits a Christian interpolation. It is essentially in the spirit of the TEACHING, a counsel of right living, calling for works in opposition to the new doctrine that faith is the one thing needful, and sounding the Ebionitic note (v, 1): "Go to now, ye rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you." But save for the interpolation and the naming of Jesus Christ in the sentence of preamble, there is no specific Jesuist or Christist teaching whatever. If this document was current among the Jesuists, it was borrowed from a Jewish author who had at most one special item of belief in common with them, that of "the coming [*or* presence] of the Lord" (v. 7, 8); and here there is no certainty that "the Lord" meant for the writer the Christ.

Once more, then, we turn for our first clue to the Judaic TEACHING, which on its face exhibits the gradual accretion of Jesuist elements, beginning with an Ebionitic mention of the "Servant" Jesus, and proceeding step by step from a stage in which wandering "apostles" or "prophets" must subsist from hand to mouth and from day to day, to one in which settled prophets are supported by first fruits, and yet a further one in which bishops and deacons appear to administer while prophets and teachers continue to teach. And as the "prophets" constitute a class which in the third century has disappeared from the church, as if its work were done; and as they bear the name given to the chief producers of the sacred literature of Judaism, it would seem to be the natural surmise that they were the primary producers of special literature for the early Christian churches.

## CHAPTER VI

### EARLY BOOK-MAKING

#### § 1. *The "Didachê"*

EVIDENTLY the TEACHING (*Didachê*) OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES was humbly used by some of the early Jesuists as an authoritative Jewish manual which supplied them with their rule of conduct, they only later supplying (c. ix) their special rite of the "Eucharist" of wine and broken <sup>1</sup> bread, and vaguely mentioning "the life and knowledge which thou hast made known to us by Jesus thy Servant." *There is no mention of crucifixion, no naming of Jesus as Messiah.* We are confronted with a primary Judaic Jesuism which is not that of the gospels, nor that of the Paulines, nor that of the Acts, though it agrees with the latter in calling Jesus the Servant of the Lord. It is even of older type than Ebionism; for the Ebionites carried their cult of poverty and asceticism to the point of using water instead of wine in the Eucharist; <sup>2</sup> whereas the *Didachê* specifies wine, the older practice. The cup of the Eucharist is "the holy wine of David thy servant, which thou hast made known to us through Jesus thy servant"; and the thanks which follow (c. 10) are to the holy Father "for thy holy name, which thou hast caused to dwell in our hearts, and for the knowledge and faith and immortality which thou hast made known to us through Jesus thy servant."

<sup>1</sup> "The Broken" is used as a noun: bread is only understood. Evidently the breaking was vitally symbolic, as is explained in the context. Cp. Luke xxiv, 30, 35.

<sup>2</sup> Irenæus, *Against Heresies*, v, 3.

It is quite clear that in this form of Jesuism, visibly early as compared with that set forth in the gospels and the Acts, we have something different from that in its derivation. The Eucharist, here so called ostensibly for the first time, is only inferribly derived from a sacrament of the body and blood of the sacrificed Jesus. *Eucharistia* means thanksgiving or thank-offering, and this ritual-meal is intelligibly so named. Applied, as by Justin Martyr and later Fathers, to the sacrificial sacrament of the gospels and the epistles, the name is a false description : yet the false description becomes canonical. The licit inference appears to be that the cult of a Jesus who outside of Judaism was a Sacrificed Saviour-God had here, under Judaic control, been presented as that of a Hero-Jesus, connected like Dionysos with the gift of the vine, and associated with a ritual meal of thanksgiving to Yahweh, whose "servant" he is.

Taking the *Didachê* as a stage in the Christian evolution, we further infer that the conception and name of a "Eucharist" was thence imposed on another and older species of ritual-meal, in which the Jesus is slain as a sacrifice and commemorated in a sacrificial sacrament. The more Judaic form of the cult absorbs an older and non-Judaic form, forced to the front by a death-story which gives to its sacrament a higher virtue for the devotee. It is a case of competition of cult forms for survival, the weaker being superseded. And as the sacrament, so the Jesus, is developed on other lines. He of the *Didachê* is neither Son of God nor Saviour, as he is not the Messiah, though he has somehow conveyed "knowledge and faith and immortality." What the *Didachê* does is to begin the process of a doctrinal and ethical teaching which coalesces with that of evolving the God.

In the eighth section, the "Lord's Prayer" is intro-

duced with the formula "Nor pray ye like the hypocrites, but as the Lord commanded in his gospel." Now "the Lord" has in every previous mention clearly meant, not Jesus, who is mentioned solely in the "servant" passages, but "God," "the Father," the Jewish deity. Either, then, "the Lord . . . in his gospel" refers to some "gospel" of Yahweh or, as is highly probable, the whole clause is a late interpolation. This is the more likely because the seventh section, prescribing baptism in the name of "the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit," is flagrantly interpolated. That being so, the provision at the end of c. 9, that no one shall partake of the Eucharist except those baptized in the name of the Lord, must be held to be also a late interpolation. Thus the document has been manipulated to some extent even in its early portions. The only other mentions of the gospel are in chapters 11 and 15, which follow after the "Amen" of the tenth, and represent the progressive provisions for the apostles and prophets of the growing church. The introduction of Jesuism in chapters 9 and 10 is pre-gospel.

This will be disputed only by those who, like the first American and German editors, cannot see that the first five or six sections are purely Judaic. After Dr. Charles Taylor and other English editors did so, coinciding with an early suggestion of M. Massebieau,<sup>1</sup> the rest have mostly come into line; and even the American editors at the outset saw that the Epistle of Barnabas, which has so much of the matter of the TEACHING, is the later and not the earlier document. Thus the Lord's Prayer takes its place as originally a Jewish and not a Christian document; and the passages in the early chapters which

<sup>1</sup> See *Introd. to Messrs. Hitchcock and Brown's (American) ed.*, 1885, p. lxxviii.

coincide with the Sermon on the Mount are equally Jewish.<sup>1</sup>

We can now understand the tradition that Matthew, of which the present opening chapters are so plainly late, was the first of the gospels, and was primarily a collection of *logia*. But the *logia* were in the terms of the case not *logia Iesou* at all, being but a compilation of Jewish dicta on the lines of the TEACHING, and, as regards the form of beatitude, probably an imitation of other Jewish literature as exemplified in the "Slavonic ENOCH."<sup>2</sup>

It must be repeated, however, that the ninth and tenth sections of the TEACHING are not to be taken as giving us "the" original Jesus of the Jesuist movement. We have posited, with Professor Smith, a "multifocal" movement; and concerning the Jesus here given we can only say that the document tells of the primary connection of the Jesus-Name with a non-sacrificial Eucharist. Whether the name stood historically for Joshua or for the Jesus of Zechariah, or for yet another, it is impossible to pronounce. What is clear is that it does *not* point to the Jesus of the gospels. When the Jesus-sections of the TEACHING were penned, the gospels were yet to come; and the crucified Saviour-God of Paul was not preached, though his myth was certainly current somewhere.

## § 2. *The Apocalypse*

The "Revelation of John the Theologian" is also, in respect of much of its matter, pre-gospel, and even in its later elements independent of the gospels. It is noteworthy that the latest professional criticism has

<sup>1</sup> Above, p. 132.

<sup>2</sup> C.M. 422.



after infinite fumbling come (without acknowledging him) to the view of Dupuis that the episode of the woman and the child and the dragon belong to sun-myth;<sup>1</sup> and the exegetes would probably save themselves a good deal of further guessing by contemplating Dupuis's solution that the special details are simply derived from an ancient planisphere or fuller zodiac, in which the woman and the dragon and the hydra are prominent figures.<sup>2</sup> It is in any case particularly important to realize that this palpably mythical conception of a Jesus Christ, figured as "the Lamb," evidently with a zodiacal reference, is found in one of the earliest documents of the cult, outside of the gospels.

In these, as we have seen, the original God-Man is progressively humanized from the hieratic figure of the opening chapters of Mark, through Matthew and Luke, till in the fourth, which declares him Logos and pre-mundane, he has close personal friends and (ostensibly) weeps for the death of one. But not even the thoughtless criticism which professes to find a recognizable human figure in Mark can pretend to find one in Revelation. There, admittedly on Jewish bases, there is limned an unearthly figure, who has been "pierced," we are not told where; who has the keys of death and Hades, and carries on his right hand seven stars; and has eyes like a flame of fire and feet like unto burnished brass. With this pre-Christian apparatus, which on the astrological side goes back to Persia and Babylon, there is carried on a fierce polemic against certain of the "seven

<sup>1</sup> Bousset in *Encyc. Bib.* i, 209, following Gunkel, *Schöpfung und Chaos*.

<sup>2</sup> Cp. R. Brown, Jr., *Primitive Constellations*, 1899, i, 64-65, 104, 119, etc.; G. Schiaparelli, *Astronomy in the O. T.*, 1905, p. 72; Hon. Emmeline M. Plunket, *Ancient Calendars and Constellations*, 1903, 117-123, and maps; and Hippolytus, *Ref. of all Heresies*, v, 47-49.

churches," the sect of the Nicolaitans, and "them which say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan." The churches named are not those of the Acts and the Pauline epistles: Jerusalem and Antioch are not named, though Ephesus is. Jewish and pre-Jewish myth and doctrine overlay the Jesuist, which at many points is visibly a mere verbal interpolation; so that the question arises whether even the seven churches are primarily Christian or Jewish.

If "Babylon" stands for Rome, it is but an adaptation of an older polemic; for Babylon is declared to have actually fallen, before it is announced that she "shall be cast down."<sup>1</sup> The eleventh chapter dilates on the Jewish temple; again and again we listen to a purely Jewish declamation over Jewish woes; the four-and-twenty elders and the Lamb "as though it had been slain, having seven horns, and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God," are of Babylonian and Persian derivation; and the "second death" is Egyptian. In the new Jerusalem, "coming down out of heaven," twelve angels are at the gates, which bear the names of the twelve tribes; and the "twelve apostles of the Lamb" are represented only by "twelve basement courses" of the wall.

How much such a document stood for in the early building-up of the cult it is impossible to gather from the records, which indicate that it was long regarded askance by the gospel-reading and epistle-reading churches. But it gives a definite proof that the cult had roots wholly unlike those indicated in the "catholic" tradition, and wholly incompatible with the beginnings set out in the gospels and the Acts.

<sup>1</sup> Rev. xviii, 2, 21.

§ 3. *Epistles*

The outstanding problem in regard to the Epistles in the mass is that while criticism is more and more pressing them out of the "apostolic" period into the second century, they show practically no knowledge of the gospels. As little do they show any trace of the "personality" of the Founder, which is posited by the biographical school as the ground for the resurrection myth. Of Jesus as a remarkable personality there is no glimpse in the whole literature; and it must be a relief for the defenders of his historicity to be invited to pronounce both James and Jude pseudepigraphic documents, the former written with direct polemic reference to the Pauline doctrine of faith.<sup>1</sup> The puzzle is to conceive how, on that view, the document can still remain so destitute of Jesuit colouring.

Save for the two namings of Jesus (i, 1; ii, 1) at the beginnings of chapters, there is no trace of Jesuine doctrine; the epistle is addressed to "the twelve tribes of the Dispersion"; and there is a reference (ii, 2) to "your synagogue," not to "your ecclesia." When therefore we note the extremely suspicious character of the second naming of Jesus, "our Lord Jesus Christ of glory," we are doubly entitled to diagnose interpolation; and the first naming at once comes under suspicion. It is not surprising therefore that such a critic as Spitta pronounces the epistle a Jewish document.<sup>2</sup> Even if it were true, then, that the eschatological matter has a gospel colouring, that would carry us no further than a surmise that the Jewish document had been slightly developed for Jesuine purposes. And this may be the

<sup>1</sup> *Encyc. Bib.* art. JAMES.

<sup>2</sup> A view independently put before his (1896) by the present writer.

solution as to the anti-Pauline element. An originally Jewish document may have been used by a Judæo-Christian to carry an attack on a doctrine of Gentilizing Christism. The residual fact is that a section of the Jesuist movement in the second century was satisfied with a quasi-apostolic document which has no hint of the teaching of a historical Jesus. Naturally it soon passed into "catholic" disfavour.

But the remaining epistles differ historically from this only in respect of their asseveration of a crucified Christ, by faith in whom men are saved. They too are devoid of biographical data. Neither parable nor miracle, doctrine nor deed, family history nor birthplace, of the Founder is ever mentioned in the epistolary literature, any more than in the Apocalypse or the Didachê. And yet the mass of the epistles are being, as aforesaid, more and more pressed upon by criticism as pseudepigraphic. Second Peter was always in dispute; and First Peter has few save traditionalist supporters. If First John is to be bracketed with the fourth gospel, it is dismissed with that as outside the synoptic tradition: and the second and third epistles are simply dropped as spurious. Hebrews is anonymous, though our Revisers saw fit to retain its false title; and that epistle too is utterly devoid of testimony to a historical Jesus. It tells simply of a human sacrifice, in which the victim "suffered without the gate," in accordance with the regular sacrificial practice. Late or early, then, the epistles give no support to the gospels—or, at least, to the biographical theory founded on these.

It is thus quite unnecessary to argue here the interesting question of the genuineness of any of the Pauline epistles. Long ago, nine were given up by the Tübingen school, and four only claimed to be genuine. Remem-

bering the datum of Eusebius that Paul personally penned "only a few very short" epistles, though specially gifted in the matter of style, we are not unprepared to find even these called in question. And latterly the Dutch school whose work culminated in Van Manen has built up an impressive case<sup>1</sup> for the rejection of the whole mass, the supreme "four" included; and the defence so far made by the traditionalists is the reverse of impressive.<sup>2</sup> The ablest counter-criticism comes from other men of the left wing, as Schmiedel, who makes havoc of the Acts.

From the point of view of the historical as distinguished from the documentary critic, all that need here be said on the issue is that the negative case may have to be restated if there is faced the hypothesis that the Jesuine movement was of comparatively old standing, and of some degree of development, when Paul came on the scene. Van Manen assumes the substantial historicity not only of Jesus but of the Jesuine movement as set forth in the Gospels; and whereas he found it hard to make that assumption on the view that any of the Paulines was genuine, he had no difficulty about it when he relegated them all to the second century. It should be asked, then, whether the view that the Jesus-cult is "pre-Christian" might not re-open the case for some of the Paulines.

Having put that caveat, the historical critic has simply to consider the question of the historicity of

<sup>1</sup> Admirably summarized by Mr. T. Whittaker in his *Origins of Christianity*. Cp. Van Manen's art. PAUL in *Encyc. Bib.*

<sup>2</sup> Dr. F. C. Conybeare has indicated the view that, Van Manen's chair having been offered to him after Van Manen's death, he is in a position to dispose of Van Manen's case by expressing his contempt for it. And Dr. Conybeare is prepared to accept as genuine the whole of the epistles, a position rejected by all the professional critics except the extreme traditionalists.



Jesus in relation to the Paulines from both points of view, asking what evidence they can be supposed to yield either on the view of the genuineness of some or on that of the spuriousness of all. And the outcome is that on neither view do they tell of a historical Jesus. If "the four" are genuine, Paul, declared to be so near the influence of the "personality" of Jesus, not only shows no trace of impression from it but expressly puts aside the question. In the Epistle to the Galatians he declares that he had not learned his gospel from the other apostles but received it by special revelation, actually avoiding intercourse with the other apostles apart from Peter—a proposition certainly savouring strongly of post-Pauline dialectic, as does the text (2 Cor. v, 16): "Even though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know [him so] no more." Instead then of the Paulines, on the view of their genuineness, confirming the conception of a remarkable personality which had profoundly impressed those who came in contact with it, they radically and unmanageably conflict with that conception. So far Van Manen is justified.

If on the other hand we accept the strongly supported thesis that they are all pseudepigraphic, the historicity of the gospels is in no way accredited. We reach the view that early in the second century, when such early gospels as the Matthew and Mark of Papias may be supposed to have been current, even the devotees who wrote in Paul's name took no interest in the human personality of Jesus, but were concerned simply about the religious significance of his death. The passages in First Corinthians (xi, 23 *sq.*; xv, 3 *sq.*) which deal with the Supper and the Resurrection expressly repudiate knowledge of the gospels; the first claiming to have "received of the Lord" the facts retailed, and the

second, after a similar formula, proffering data not given in any gospel. And both passages have been demonstrably interpolated, even if we do not pronounce them, as we are entitled to do, interpolations as wholes. The first breaks the continuity of an exhortation as to the proper way of eating the Lord's Supper; the second is introduced (xv, 1) with a strange profession to "*make known* unto you the gospel *which I preached* unto you." And even the second passage, with its mention of "the twelve," excludes knowledge of the story of Judas; while the first, at the point at which our revisers translate "was betrayed," really says only "delivered up" (*παρεδίδото*), which may or may not imply betrayal.

How Van Manen could find in all this any support for the gospel story in general he never explained; and obviously no support is given. Historically considered, the epistles undermine the biographical theory whether we reckon them early or late, genuine or pseudepigraphic. If early, they discredit completely the notion of a historical Jesus of impressive personality. If as late as Van Manen makes them (120-140) they tell not only of indifference to the personality of Jesus but of ignorance of the gospel story as we have it, strongly suggesting that the complete story of the tragedy was yet unknown, and that only in still later interpolations, made before the Judas story was current, was it to be indicated.

What is more, the Paulines, like other Epistles, tell of vital unbelief as to the reality of Jesus. Paul is made to protest that "some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead" (1 Cor. xv, 12). These Jesuists, then, held at most only a faith in future salvation by virtue of the sacrament. So in First John it is implied (iv, 2-3) that some of the adherents confess not that Jesus is come in the flesh, which is declared to be the

doctrine of "the antichrist," a type of which "many" (ii, 18) have arisen.

We are critically forced, then, to the conclusion that for a century after the alleged death of the Founder the Jesuist movement had either no literature whatever save one of primarily Jewish documents such as the *Didachê* or problematic short Pauline epistles which have either disappeared or been absorbed in much longer documents of later date, which in turn still tell of no Jesuine Sacred Books. All alike exclude the conception of a historical Jesus of remarkable personality. In the doctrinal quarrels which have already driven deep furrows in the faith, the personality of Jesus counts for nothing. In that connection no one cites any teaching of the Master. He is simply an abstract sacrifice; and even in that aspect he is not clearly present in the Jewish-Christian *Didachê*. Of his earthly parentage, domicile, or career, there is not a word. Everything goes to confirm our hypothesis that the cult is of ancient origin, rooted in a sacrament which evolved out of a rite of human sacrifice and connected with non-Jewish as well as Jewish myths which from the first tended to the deification of the Slain One.

It remains, then, to consider the gospels anew as compilations made in the second century of (1) previously current Jewish lore, written and unwritten; (2) doctrinal elements indicated by the sectarian disputes already active; (3) pseudo-historic elements justifying Messianic doctrine and practice; and (4) the Mystery-Drama, now developed under Gentile hands. Upon all this followed (5) the new theology and new pseudo-biography of the fourth gospel, which was but another stage in the general process of myth-making.

## CHAPTER VII

### GOSPEL-MAKING

#### § 1. *Tradition*

ACCORDING to the tradition preserved through Papias (d. *circa* 165), from "John the presbyter," who is not pretended to have been John the Apostle, the first gospels were those of Mark, the "interpreter" of Peter, who set down in no chronological order the "sayings and doings" of the Lord as he had gathered them from Peter; and of Matthew, who wrote the *logia* or sayings "in the Hebrew dialect" <sup>1</sup>—presumably Aramaic. This, the earliest written tradition concerning the matter embodied in the gospels, is preserved to us from Papias' lost "Exposition of the Dominical <sup>2</sup> Oracles" (*Λογίων κυριακῶν*) by Eusebius. For his own part, Papias professed to set more store by what he received from Aristion and the Presbyter John and other disciples of the Lord than by anything "out of books." And it chanced that he gave out as a Dominical Oracle <sup>3</sup> thus certificated a crude picture of millennial marvels which is actually taken from either the APOCALYPSE OF BARUCH, which here imitated the BOOK OF ENOCH, or from an older source.<sup>4</sup> Concerning this utterance of the Lord, further, Papias narrated a conversation between Jesus

<sup>1</sup> Eusebius, *Hist. Eccles.* iii, 39, end.

<sup>2</sup> This term, it will be noted, tells of an abstract or generalized and not of a "personal" tradition.

<sup>3</sup> Irenæus, *Against Heresies*, v, 33.

<sup>4</sup> Canon Charles, note on *Apoc. Baruch*, xxix, 5.

and Judas, in which the latter figures as a freethinker, expressing disbelief in the prediction.

Eusebius, scandalized by such testimony, pronounced Papias a man of small understanding. But he is the first Christian authority as to the history of the gospels; and the very fact that he set less store by them than by oral tradition is evidence that he had no reason for thinking them more authoritative than the matter that reached him by word of mouth. It may be that he knew only Greek, and that he could not read for himself the Aramaic *logia*, concerning which he says that "every one interpreted them for himself as he was able." From the *logia* and the proto-Mark to the first two synoptics the evolution can only be guessed. No one now claims that we possess the original documents even in translation. Matthew as it stands is admittedly not a translation; and Dr. Conybeare, who idly alleges that I pay no heed to the order of priority of the gospels, and insists chronically on the general priority of Mark, avows that "Mark, the main source of the first and third evangelists, is himself no original writer, but a compiler, who pieces together and edits earlier documents in which his predecessors had written down popular traditions of the miracles and passion of Jesus."<sup>1</sup> And he predicates in one part "four stages of documentary development."<sup>2</sup> How in this state of things the existing Mark can be proved to be the main source of Matthew and Luke is not and cannot be explained. Mark too is admittedly not a translation from Aramaic; but some of his sources may have been.

Concerning Matthew, again, the tradition runs that according to Papias he told a story of a woman accused of many sins before the Lord; and Eusebius adds,

<sup>1</sup> *Myth, Magic, and Morals*, 2nd ed. p. 58.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* p. 53.



apparently on his own part, that this is contained in the Gospel according to the Hebrews. If this was the story (now bracketed in R.V.) found only in late copies of the fourth gospel, the "Hebrew" gospel contained matter notably special to itself; and such is the conclusion established by a collation of all the 33 fragments preserved. "We arrive . . . at a Gospel (a) in great part independent of the extant text of our gospels, and (b) showing no signs of relationship to Mark or John, but (c) bearing a very marked affinity to Matthew, and (d) a less constant but still obvious affinity to Luke."<sup>1</sup> The hypothesis of Nicholson is "that Matthew wrote at *different times* the canonical gospel and the gospel according to the Hebrews, or at least that large part of the latter which runs parallel to the former."<sup>2</sup>

On this view, "Matthew" in one of his versions deliberately omitted (1) the remarkable story of the woman taken in adultery; (2) the remarkable story that "the mother of the Lord and his brethren" proposed to him that they should all go and be baptized by John, whereupon he asked "Wherein have I sinned?" but added: "except perchance this very thing that I have said in ignorance," and went accordingly; (3) the statement that at baptism Jesus saw the dove "entering into him"; (4) the further item that "the entire fountain of the Holy Spirit descended and rested upon him," addressing him as "My son"; and (5) Jesus' use of the phrase, "My mother, the Holy Spirit." Such a hypothesis, if accepted, deprives of all meaning the notion of an "author" of a document. The only fair inference is that a Greek translation of the Hebrew gospel was one of the sources of the present Matthew, and that either

<sup>1</sup> E. B. Nicholson, *The Gospel according to the Hebrews*, 1879, p. 101.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* p. 104.

(a) many of its details have been rejected, or (b) that many of the preserved fragments were additions to the original.

On either view, we must pronounce that the Hebrew gospel, as exhibited in the fragments, has none of the marks of a real biographical record. The items of narrative are wholly supernaturalist; the items of teaching belong to the more advanced Jewish ethic which we find progressively developed from Matthew to Luke. Once more, the critical inference is either (a) that the ethically-minded among the Jesuit "prophets" set out by putting approved doctrines in the mouth of the legendary Saviour-God, whereafter doctrinary episodes were invented for cult purposes, or (b) that the miraculous life was first pieced out in terms of Old Testament prophecies held for Messianic. Having regard to the ethical nullity of the primary evangel posited in the synoptics, the presumption is wholly against any primary manufacture of new *logia*. If we take the Sermon on the Mount as typical, the matter is all pre-Christian.<sup>1</sup> If we pronounce the *method* of the first canonical gospel to be secondary in relation to that of Mark, the ethical element enters only after the cult has gone a long way, and is then Jewish matter subsumed, as in the *Didachê*.

On bases so laid, there accrue a multitude of expletions, stones added to the cairn, as: episodes favouring this or that view of the proper Messianic heredity; of the Messiah's ascetic or non-ascetic character; of his attitude for or against Samaritans; of his thaumaturgic principles; of the universality or selectness of the salvation he brings; of his attitude towards the Roman power, towards divorce, towards the Scribes and Pharisees, and so on. Up to the point of the establishment of some-

<sup>1</sup> *C.M.* 403 *sq.*

thing like a Canon, the longer the cult lasted, the greater would be the variety of the teaching. Different views of the descent and character of the Messiah, put forward by Davidists and non-Davidists, Nazarites and non-Nazarites, Jews and Samaritans, would all tend to find currency, and all would tend to find a place in the scroll of some group, whence they could ill be ousted by any "Catholic" movement. Still later, definitely anti-Jewish matter is grafted piecemeal by Gentile adherents: the "good Samaritan" is an impeachment of Jewish character; and the legendary apostles are progressively belittled—notably so in the mystery play which finally supersedes the earlier accounts of the Tragedy.

That such a general process actually took place is of necessity admitted by the biographical school, their problem consisting in delimiting the amount of tradition which they can plausibly claim as genuine. From the point of that delimitation they posit a process of doctrinal and other myth-making. The decision now claimed is that there is no point of scientific delimitation, and that the process which they carry forward from an arbitrarily fixed point must logically be carried backwards.

No more general or more far-reaching result can be reached by a mere collation and analysis of the synoptics on purely documentary lines—a process which has gone on for a century without even a documentary decision. The conclusion forced upon Schmiedel, even on the assumption of the historicity of Jesus, that none of the current theories of gospel-composition can meet the problem,<sup>1</sup> becomes part of the case of the myth-theory. The assumption that a "source," once established, gives a historic foundation, is no more tenable in this than in any other case of a challenged myth; and the current

<sup>1</sup> Art. GOSPELS in *Encyc. Bib.* cols. 1868, 1872.

methods of establishing sources, rooted as they are in the assumption of historicity, are often quite arbitrary even when they profess to follow documentary tests. Nevertheless, the normal pressure of criticism is seen driving champions of the priority of Mark to the confession that Mark not only contains late additions but is in itself a secondary or tertiary document, pointing to an earlier Mark, an *Ur-Markus*. The primary flaw in the process is the habit of looking to an author rather than at a compilation; and this habit roots in the assumption of historicity. At no point can we be sure whether we are reading a transcript of oral lore or a redaction.

Granting that Mark has pervading peculiarities of diction which suggest one hand, we are still not entitled to say that such peculiarities would not be adopted by a redactor. Again, as against the relative terseness or simplicity of a number of passages which suggest an earlier form, we have many which by their relative diffuseness admittedly suggest deliberate elaboration.<sup>1</sup> And if we are to ask ourselves what was *likely* to be the method of an early evangelist, how shall we reconcile the "in the stern, asleep on the cushion" (iv, 38) with the absolute traditionalism and supernaturalism of the first chapter? John, "clothed with camel's hair," is simply a duplicate of Elijah.<sup>2</sup> Is one realistic detail to pass for personal knowledge when the other is sheer typology? In the opening chapter, Jesus comes as the promised "Lord," is prophesied of by John as the Coming One, is hailed by God from heaven as his beloved son, sees the heavens rent asunder and the Spirit descending as a dove, fasts forty days in the wilderness,

<sup>1</sup> Art. GOSPELS in *Encyc. Bib.* cols. 1767, 1846.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Kings i, 8: R.V. marg.

is ministered to by angels, calls on men to follow him at his first word, proceeds to give marvellous teaching of which not a word is preserved, is hailed by a demoniac as the Holy One of God, expels a devil, cures a fever instantaneously, heals a multitude, casts out many devils, who know him, goes through the synagogues of Galilee, casting out devils and preaching, cures a leper instantaneously, commands secrecy, is disobeyed, and is then flocked-to by more multitudes. And we are invited to believe that we are reading the biography of a real man, who always speaks to Jews as one Jew to another, and is "not too bright and good for human nature's daily food." And the confident champion of this biographical theory assures us that we "need not doubt" that Jesus was a "successful exorcist."

## § 2. *Schmiedel's Tests*

Either the first chapter of Mark is primordial gospel-writing or it is not. If it is, the biographical theory is as idle as those ridiculed by Socrates in the PHÆDRUS. If it is not, upon what does the biographical theory found? The details of "mending their nets" and "in the boat with the hired servants"? Professor Schmiedel, conscious of the unreality of such narrative, falls back upon nine selected texts, seven of them in Mark, which he claims as "pillars" of a real biography of Jesus,<sup>1</sup> on the score that they present him as (a) flouted in his pretensions or (b) himself disclaiming deity, or (c) *declining* to work wonders, or (d) apparently denying a miracle story, or (e) crying out to God on the cross that he is forsaken. Now, of all such texts, only *b* and *e* types can have any

<sup>1</sup> This thesis is put by the Professor in art. GOSPELS in *Encyc. Bib.* col. 1881; also, at greater length, in his lecture, *Jesus in Modern Criticism*, and his work on *The Johannine Writings* (Eng. trans.; Black, 1907, 1908).



such evidential force as Schmiedel ascribes to them.<sup>1</sup> Type *a* counts for nothing: not only the suffering Saviour-Gods but Apollo and Arês, to say nothing of Hephaistos, Hêrê, and Aphroditê, are flouted in the pagan literature which treats them as Gods. If to quote "he is beside himself" is to prove historicity, why not quote the taunts to Jesus in the fourth gospel, nay, the crucifixion itself?

In his able and interesting work on THE JOHANNINE WRITINGS, Schmiedel carefully developes the thesis that the Johannine Jesus is an invented figure, conceived from the first as supernatural; and he puts among other things the notable proposition that when Jesus weeps it is implied by the evangelist that he does so not out of human sympathy, but "simply because they [the kinsfolk of Lazarus] did not believe in his power to work miracles."<sup>2</sup> Assuming for the argument's sake that this is a true interpretation, we are driven to ask how the thesis consists with that of the "pillar texts." The Johannine writer starts with a supernatural Jesus, yet not only represents his attached personal friends as not believing in his power to work miracles but describes Jesus as weeping because of their unbelief. Nothing in Mark is for moderns more incongruous with a supernaturalist view of Jesus, yet Schmiedel sees no difficulty in believing that the Johannine writer could deliberately frame the incongruity. Why then should even an original author of Mark be held to regard Jesus as mortal because in Mark he is flouted, or declines to work wonders, or is unable to do so at Nazareth?

<sup>1</sup> I have dealt with the nine texts seriatim in *C.M.* 441 *sq.*, and *P.C.* 229 *sq.* They are more fully and very ably discussed by Prof. Smith (*Ecce Deus*, Part III), with most though not with all of whose criticism I am in agreement.

<sup>2</sup> Eng. trans. p. 31.

If one writer can represent the Eternal Logos as weeping from chagrin, why should not the other think him God even when he cries out that God has forsaken him? And if, finally, the cry is held to cite Psalm xxii, 1, and to imply the triumphant conclusion of that psalm, what value has the passage for the critic's purpose?

An unbiassed criticism will of course recognize that the "Jesus wept" may be an interpolation, for it is admitted that the Greek words rendered "groaned in the spirit" may mean "was moved with indignation in the spirit"; and, yet again, Martha is represented (xi, 22) as avowing the belief that "even now" Jesus can raise Lazarus by the power of God. Nay, the whole story may be an addition, not from the pen of the writer who makes Jesus God. But equally the incongruities in Mark may come of interpolation. A fair inference from the characteristics of that document is that parts of it, notably the first dozen paragraphs, represent a condensation of previously current matter, while others are as plainly expansive; and even if these diversely motivated sections be from the same hand, interpolations might be made in either.

In reply to my argument <sup>1</sup> that texts in which Jesus figures as a natural man would at most represent only Ebionitic views, Professor Schmiedel puts the perplexing challenge, concerning the Ebionites:—"Were they not also *worshippers* of Jesus as well? Were they really men of such wickedness that they sought to bring the true humanity of Jesus into acceptance by *falsifying* the Gospels? And if they were, was it in their power to effect this falsification with so great success?" <sup>2</sup> I cannot think that Dr. Schmiedel, who is invariably

<sup>1</sup> *P.C.* 234.

<sup>2</sup> Pref. to Eng. trans. of Arno Neumann's *Jesus*, 1906, p. xx.

candid, has thought out the positions here taken up. The point that the Ebionites were "worshippers" of Jesus is surely fatal to his own thesis. "Worshippers" could in their case go on worshipping while maintaining that the worshipped one was a mortal. Then to assert that he avowed himself a mortal was not inconsistent with "worship." But the challenge obscures the issue; and it is still more obscured when the Professor goes on to ask: "Had they [the Ebionites] no predecessors in this view of his person? Must we not suppose that precisely the earliest Christians, the actual companions of Jesus—supposing Him really to have lived—were their predecessors?" This argument, the Professor must see, has small bearing on *my* position.

Three questions are involved, from the mythological point of view: first, whether actual believers in an alleged divinity could represent him as flouted, humiliated, or temporarily powerless; second, whether the Ebionitic view of Jesus can be accounted for otherwise than as the persistence of a proto-Christian view, arising among the immediate adherents of a man Jesus; third, whether in the second century Jesuists of Ebionitic views could invent, and insert in the gospels, sayings of or concerning Jesus which were meant to countervail the belief in his divinity.

On the first head, the answer is, as aforesaid, that throughout all ancient religion we find derogatory views of deity constantly entertained, at different stages of culture, without any clear consciousness of incongruity. Yahweh in the Old Testament "repents" that he made man; wrangles with Sarah; and is unable to overcome worshippers of other Gods who have "chariots of iron." Always he is a "jealous" God; and at a later stage he is alleged to be consciously thwarted by the Israelites when they insist on having a king. These are all priest-

made stories. Among the early Greeks, the Gods are still less godlike. In Homer, Athênê is almost the only deity who is treated with habitual reverence: the others are so constantly satirized, humanized, thwarted, or humiliated, that it is difficult to associate reverence, in our sense, with the portrayal at all. The statement of Arno Neumann that "it is impossible (here every historian will agree) for one who worships a hero to think and speak in such a way as to contradict or essentially modify his own worship"<sup>1</sup> is an astonishingly uncritical pronouncement, which simply ignores the main mass of ancient religious literature.

As regards the Demigods in particular it belongs to the very nature of the case that they should be at times specially thwarted and reviled by mortals, since it is their fate to die, albeit to rise again. If, then, sayings were once invented which fastened human limitations upon the Divine One for the Jesuists, there was nothing in the psychology of worshippers on their intellectual plane that should make them pronounce such sayings forgeries. As we have seen, even in the fourth gospel, which puts the Divine One higher than ever, he is made, on Professor Schmiedel's own view, to weep for sheer chagrin.

### § 3. *Tendential Tests*

More complex is the second question, as to how the Ebionite view of Jesus emerged. But the answer has already been indicated in terms of the myth-theory. And the question really cannot be answered on the biographical view, for the canonical documents give no hint<sup>2</sup> of a persistence of a "human" view among the

<sup>1</sup> Work cited, p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Unless we take the story of Thomas to be an invention to confute doubters.

early Christists as against a "divine" one. The Judaizers are represented equally with the Paulinists as making Jesus "Lord"; and it is on the Paulinist side that we hear of adherents who do not believe in the resurrection. That is really a divergence from the Judaistic view, for Jews in general accepted immortality. The moment, however, we put the hypothesis of a primitive cult of a Saviour-God whose sacrifice in some way benefits men, and whose Sacrament is the machinery of that benefit, we account for all the varieties of Jesuism known to us. The cult was primordially Semitic, a thing on the outskirts of later Judaism, which would be Judaized in so far as it came under Jewish influence, and then theologically re-cast for Gentilism by Gentilizing Jews. Thus there would be Judaistic Ebionites, and Jesuists such as those taught by the *Didachê*, who would insist on connecting Jesus only with the Eucharist, making him a subordinate figure, upon whose legend were slowly grafted moral teachings.

On the other hand there would be non-Jewish Jesuists who valued the Sacrament as they and others valued those of Paganism, counting on magical benefits from it (as "Catholics" in general did for many centuries), but making light of the Jewish future life. The one thing in common was the primordial sacrament, at once Jewish and non-Jewish. For Jews it would easily connect with the belief in immortality, already much connected with Messianism; for Gentiles who accepted the former belief, it would be still more easily connected with a doctrine of future individual salvation. All is broadly intelligible on the myth-theory. On the biographical theory, the Jesuists of the *Didachê* are as inexplicable as the Gentile Jesuists who denied a future life, or the Docetists who denied that Jesus had come in the flesh.



Given such Jewish Jesuists, and given Docetism, the invention of sayings and episodes in which Jesus is thwarted or flouted, or disavows Godhood, is perfectly simple. Why Professor Schmiedel should raise the question of "wickedness" in this connection I cannot divine. On his own showing, the invention of sayings and episodes was normal among the Christists in general; and it affected all of the synoptics. Does he impute "wickedness" to the author of the fourth gospel, whom he represents as inventing discourses and episodes systematically? The Ebionites and Docetists had as much right to invent as any one else; and once their inventions were current, they stood a fair chance of being embodied in a gospel or gospel by reason of the general incapacity of the Christists for critical reflection.

From the biographical standpoint, the Ebionites and their counterparts the Nazaræans are indeed enigmatic. It is important to have a clear view of what is known as to both sects.<sup>1</sup> Origen, noting that the Hebrew name of the former means "the poor," angrily implies that it was given to them as describing their poverty of mind,<sup>2</sup> but leaves open the rational inference that the name originally described their chosen social status, which connected with a belief in the speedy end of the world. In his book *Against Celsus*,<sup>3</sup> he tells that they include believers in the Virgin Birth and deniers of it. Here arises the surmise that the former were the *socii Ebionitarum* mentioned by Jerome, who diverged from Judaic views, and may have been of the general cast of the Nazaræans.<sup>4</sup> These bodies constituted the mass of the

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 113 sq., as to the Nazaræans.

<sup>2</sup> *De Principiis*, iv, 22.

<sup>3</sup> B. v, c. 61.

<sup>4</sup> Cp. Neander, *Church Hist.* Bohn trans. i, 482-3. Jerome speaks (*In Matt.* xii, 13) of the gospel *quo utuntur Nazaraei et Ebionitae*, as if they held it in common. Cp. Nicholson, p. 28.

Christians in Judæa in the second century. According to the ecclesiastical tradition, the church of Jerusalem had withdrawn during the siege to Pella and the neighbouring region beyond the Jordan. In the reign of Hadrian, after the revolt and destruction of the Messiah Bar-Cochab, who had attempted to rebuild the temple, the new Roman city of *Ælia Capitolina* was built on the ruins of Jerusalem; and in that no Jews were permitted to dwell. Only those Christians who renounced Judaic usages, then, could enter; and a number of such Christians, Jew and Gentile, did so. Others, probably including both Ebionites and Nazaræans, remained at Pella, and these appear to have furnished the types of heresy discussed by Irenæus, Origen, Jerome, and Epiphanius under the head of Ebionism. Those who set up in Jerusalem were in the way of substituting for "voluntary poverty" a propaganda and organization which meant comfort. Those who stayed behind would represent the primitive type.

Now, neither Ebionism nor Nazaræanism offers any semblance of support for the biographical view. Some Ebionites denied the Virgin Birth; some, presumably the Nazaræans in particular, accepted it, the latter being described as accepting the canonical Matthew (or a Hebrew gospel nearly equivalent) with the present opening chapters, while the Ebionites had a Matthew without them. Of the two views, neither testified to any impression made by a "personality." The Virgin Birth myth is a reversion to universal folk-lore by way of enlarging the supernaturalist claim: the Ebionite denial is either a rejection of all purely human claim for Jesus or only supernaturalism with a difference, inasmuch as it inferribly posits a divinization of the Founder either at the moment of his baptism or at his anointing. His

"personality" is the one thing never heard of in the discussion, so far as we can trace it. In one account, "the" Ebionites are said to have alleged that Christ became so because he perfectly fulfilled the law, and that they individually might become Christs if they fulfilled it as perfectly.<sup>1</sup> Ebionites and Nazaræans between them, on the biographical view, let slip all knowledge of the Sacred Places, of Golgotha, of the place of the Sepulchre.

If it be asked how, on the biographical view, there came to be Jewish Jesuists of the Ebionite type, men such as those described by Justin Martyr and his Jewish antagonist Trypho, believing in a Jesus "anointed by election" who thus became Christ, but adhering otherwise to Judaic practices,<sup>2</sup> what is the answer? What idea, what teaching, had Jesus left them? The notion which seems to have mainly differentiated Ebionites from Jews was simply that Jesus had been the Messiah, and that his Second Coming would mean the end of the world. Expectation of the Second Coming would at once promote and be promoted by poverty, which would thus have a special religious significance. Nazaræans, on the other hand, were latterly marked by a general opposition to the Pharisees.<sup>3</sup> But this could perfectly well be a simple development of sectarianism. If it be claimed as a result of the teaching of Jesus, what becomes of the other teaching as to the love of enemies? Which species of teaching is supposed to have represented the "personality"?

Given a general hostility between Nazaræans and Pharisees, the ascription of anti-Pharisaic teachings to the Master would have been in the ordinary way of

<sup>1</sup> Hippolytus, *Ref. of all Heresies*, vii, 22.

<sup>2</sup> *Dialogue with Trypho*, 47-49. <sup>3</sup> Neander, as cited, p. 482 and refs.

all Jewish doctrinal propaganda. In so far as they acclaimed sincerity and denounced formalism, they are intelligible as part of a general revolt against Judaic legalism. Nazaræans would invent anti-Pharisaic teachings just as they or "Catholics" would invent pro-Samaritan teachings. And in so far as the Ebionites resisted the assimilation of fresh supernaturalist folklore they would tend to put appropriate sayings in the mouth of the Master just as did the others. They are expressly charged not only with inventing a saying<sup>1</sup> in denunciation of sacrifices, by way of sanctifying their vegetarianism, which was presumably an aspect of their poverty, but of tampering in various ways with their texts.<sup>2</sup> This is precisely what the gospel-makers in general did; and to impeach the Ebionites in particular is merely to ignore the general procedure. When, then, we say that Ebionites might well invent a saying in which the Master was made to repudiate Godhood, and that such a saying might find its way into many manuscripts, as did other passages from their Hebrew gospel, it is quite irrelevant to raise questions of "wickedness" and of "worship."

But it is important here to note the point, insisted on by Professor W. B. Smith, that most of Professor Schmiedel's "pillar" texts could be framed with no thought of lowering the status of Jesus, while some, on the contrary, betray the motive of discrediting the Jews. The story of Jesus' people (*οἱ παρ' αὐτοῦ*, not "friends" as in our versions) saying "He is beside himself" (Mk. iii, 21), is simply a Gentile intimation that even among his own kin or associates he was treated as a madman. The idea is exactly the same as that of the story in the fourth gospel, that "the Jews" said he

<sup>1</sup> Epiphanius, *Hær.* xxx, 16.

<sup>2</sup> Nicholson, pp. 15, 34, 61, 77.

"had a devil" and was a Samaritan. Similarly "tentential" is the avowal (Mk. vi, 5) that at Nazareth the wonder-worker "could do no mighty work . . . and he marvelled because of their unbelief." Healing in other texts is declared to depend on faith; and to call the people of Nazareth unbelievers was either to explain why Jesus of Nazareth there had no following or to emphasize the point that the Jews had rejected the Lord. Such a doctrine, again, as that of Mt. xii, 31, that blasphemy against the Son of Man was pardonable, was perfectly natural at a stage at which the cult was seeking eagerly for converts. Had not Peter, in the legend, denied his Lord with curses, and Paul persecuted the Church to the death?

In other cases, the bearing of Professor Schmiedel's texts is so much a matter of arbitrary interpretation that the debate is otiose; and in yet others there are insoluble questions of text corruption. The thesis that *any* text "could not have been invented," and must infer the existence of a teacher regarded as mortal, is so infirm in logic that it is not surprising to find it regarded with bitter dislike by the orthodox, transparently honest as is Professor Schmiedel's use of it.

There is really more force in his argument<sup>1</sup> that the predictions of the immediate re-appearance of the Christ after "the tribulation of those days" could not have been invented long after the fall of Jerusalem, the apparent impulse being rather to minimize them. They may perfectly well have been predictions made at the approach of danger by professed prophets. But it does not in the least follow that they were made by one answering to the description of the gospel Jesus, predicting his own Second Coming, though some one may

<sup>1</sup> *Jesus in Modern Criticism*, p. 33.



have so prophesied. Any Messiah would be "the Lord"; and the gospel predictions as to false Christs tell of "many" Messiahs, every one of whom would speak as "the Lord." Such utterances, after a little while, could no more be discriminated by the Christists than the certainly pre-Christian sayings put by their propagandists in the mouth of Jesus. And, once a prediction had been written down, it lived by the tenure of uncertainty that attached to all prediction among blind believers. When one "tribulation" had apparently passed without a Second Coming, there was nothing for it but to look forward to the next.

After generations of expectation, the early eschatology of the Church became a burden to its conductors, inasmuch as expectation of the end of the world made for disorder, and neglect of industry; and Second Thessalonians was written to explain away previous predictions of imminent ending. After the whole mass of such prediction had been falsified by ages of continuance, there was still no critical reaction, simply because religious belief excludes the practice of radical criticism. To this day, orthodoxy has no rational account to give of the pervading doctrine of the New Testament as to the speedy end of the world. The biographical school finds in it a measure of support for its belief in a real Jesus, who shared the delusions of his age. But as that explanation equally applies to all men in the period, it gives the biographical view no standing as against the myth-theory. Christian prophets spoke for "the Lord" just as Jewish prophets did before them.

In this connection, finally, it has to be noted that Professor Schmiedel finds an *à priori* authenticity in a prediction in which Jesus claims supernatural status, though the ostensibly unhistorical character of such

claims was his avowed ground for positing the "pillar-texts" which alone defied all skepticism. And the formula in both cases is the same—"it could not have been invented."<sup>1</sup> The major premiss involved is: "No passage could be invented which would stultify the position of the believers." But do none of the *admitted* inventions<sup>2</sup> in the gospels stultify the position of the believers? The two genealogies do; the anti-Davidic passages stultify these; the pro-Samaritan teaching stultifies the anti-Samaritan; and so on through twenty cases of contradiction. M. Loisy, indeed, claims the pro-Samaritan passage as genuine: does he then admit the anti-Samaritan to be spurious?

The biographical school cannot have it both ways. The very fact that they have to oust so many passages on the score of incompatibility is the complete answer to the plea of "genuine because unsuitable to the purposes of the propaganda." The fact that a multitude of contradictions are left standing proves simply that when once an awkward passage was installed it was nearly impossible to get rid of it; because some copies were always left which retained it; and in the stage of increasing respect for the written word it was generally restored. The "Jesus" before Barabbas was at last ejected only because everybody recoiled from it. Predictions were not so easily dropped.

On the page on which he claims that Jesus' prediction of his Second Coming could not have been invented, Professor Schmiedel avows that various passages in

<sup>1</sup> Cp. the Professor's work on *The Johannine Writings*, p. 90, where the same query: "Who could have invented them?" is put as establishing special sayings of Buddha, Confucius, Zarathustra, and Mohammed. I cannot follow the logic.

<sup>2</sup> The argument is the same whether we say "inventions of the evangelists" or "appropriations from other documents, or from hearsay."

Mt. xxiv really belong to "a small composition, perhaps Jewish, on the signs of the end of the world, written shortly before the destruction of Jerusalem in the year 70." If the one set of passages are borrowed, why not the other? Was it unlikely that Jewish eschatologists should predict the coming of the Son of Man at the near end of the world, and that Jesuits should put the prediction in the mouth of their Lord and make him say it of himself? The *à priori* negative is quite untenable.

While, then, the argument from unsuitableness is logically barred for the biographical school by their own frequent rejection of passages on the score of incompatibility, no aspect or portion of the New Testament supplies a conclusive argument against the mythological view. The whole constitutes an intelligible set of growths from the point of view of the myth-theory; and from no other is the medley explicable. A biographical theory, having posited a Messiah whose Messianic claim is a mystery, a Teacher whose alleged teachings are a mass of conflicting tendencies, and whose disciples admittedly have no Messianic gospel till after his inexplicable execution, following on an impossible trial, may make the assumption that by way of popular myth he was then fortuitously deified by Messianist Jews, and later transformed by other Jews into a Saviour for Gentiles; but the biographical theory cannot even pretend to account for the Apocalypse and the *Didachê*; and it has to renounce its own ground principle of "personality" in order to assimilate the Epistles. On critical principles, assent must go to the theory which explains things, reducing the otherwise inexplicable to a natural evolution on the known lines and bases of hierology.

#### § 4. *Historic Summary*

We may now bring together in one outline the series of inductive hypotheses by which we seek to recover the natural evolution of the historic cult.

1. A primitive Semitic sacramental cult, whose sacrament centres in a slain Saviour-God, a Jesus, who has assimilated to an abstraction of the victim annually sacrificed to him—as in the case of the cults of Adonis and Attis, both also Asiatic. Of the sacrificial rite, which in the historic cult is embodied in the Last Supper and the dramatized story of the Passion, the memory was preserved in particular by a Jewish rite of Jesus Barabbas, Jesus the Son of the Father, in which a victim goes through a mock coronation, ending latterly, perhaps, in a mock-execution, where once there had been an actual human sacrifice.

2. This cult, with its sacrament, existed sporadically in various parts of Asia Minor, whence it spread to Greece and Egypt. Its forms would vary, and under Jewish control the sacrificial sacrament tended to be reduced to a Eucharist or thankoffering in which the “body and blood” are only vaguely, if at all, reminiscent of the Divine One’s death. As a God can always be developed indefinitely out of a God-Name, and personal Gods are historically but conceptual aggregates shaped round names or functions, the adherents of this could proselytize like others. When the Temple of Jerusalem fell in the year 70, the adherents of the cult there had a new opportunity and motive, which some of them actively embraced, to cut loose from the Judaic basis and proclaim a religion of universal scope, freed from Judaic trammels and claims. Economic motives played a considerable part in the process.

3. The first tendency of the new Jewish promoters had

been to develop the Saviour-God of the sacramental rite (which they may at this stage have adopted in its "pagan" form, now taken as canonical) into a Messiah who was to "come again," introducing the Jewish "kingdom of heaven." At a later stage they adopted the rite of baptism, traditionally associated with John, whom they represented as a Forerunner of the Messiah who had met, baptized, and acclaimed him, playing the part assigned by Jewish prophecy to Elias.

4. As time passed on, such a cult would of necessity die out among Jews, in default of the promised "Second Coming." The connection of the idea of salvation with a future life for all believers, Jew or Gentile, gave it a new and larger lease of life throughout the Roman Empire, in every part of which there were Asiatics. But the Jewish doctrine of the Second Coming remained part of the developed teaching.

5. Further machinery was accordingly necessary to spread and sustain the cult; and this was spontaneously provided by (a) developments of the early and simple propagandist organization, and (b) provision for the needs of the poor, who among the Gentiles as among the Jews were the natural adherents of a faith promising the speedy closing of the earthly scene. Richer sympathizers won esteem by giving their aid; but the poor, as always, helped each other. The propaganda included the services of travelling "prophets," and "apostles" who would be the natural compilers and inventors of Jesuine lore. The administrative organization, framed on Hellenistic lines, put more and more power in the hands of the bishop, whose interest it was to develop his diocese. At first the "prophets" and "apostles" were strictly peripatetic, being called upon to avoid the appearance of mercenariness. In course of time they were enabled to settle down, being systematically provided for.



6. Under the hands of this organization grew up the Christian Sacred Books, which gave the cult its footing as against, or rather alongside of, the Jewish, which in the circumstances had an irresistible and indispensable prestige. Thus on the literary side the Jewish influence overlaid the non-Jewish, assimilating the outside elements of scattered Jesuism. The earliest literature is Jewish, as in the case of the *Didachê*, or a Jewish-Jesuit manipulation of outside Semitic matter, as in the Apocalypse. On these foundations are laid "Christian" strata.

7. The *Didachê* ("Teaching of the Twelve Apostles of the Lord") was primarily a brief manual of monotheistic and moral instruction used by the Twelve Apostles of the Jewish High Priest. To this, Jesuit matter was gradually added. The result was that "Twelve Apostles" became part of the Christian tradition; and they had ultimately to be imposed on the gospel record, which obviously had not originally that item.

8. The Epistles represent a polemic development, perhaps on the basis of a few short Paulines. That of James, which has no specific "Christian" colour, represents Judaic resistance, in the Ebionite temper of "voluntary poverty," to the Gentilizing movement. The Paulines carry on doctrinal debate and construction against the Judaistic influence. The synoptic gospels, which in their present forms were developing about the same time, reflect those struggles primarily in anti-Samaritan and pro-Samaritan pronouncements, both ascribed to Jesus. Primarily the gospels are Judaic, and the Gentilizing movement had naturally not employed them. Paul is made in effect to disclaim their aid. In time they are adopted and partly turned to anti-Judaic ends.

9. The chief Gentile achievement in the matter is the development of the primitive sacrament-motive and

ritual (fundamentally dramatic) into the mystery-play which is transcribed in the closing chapters of Matthew and Mark. Previous accounts of the foundation of the Sacrament and the death of the Lord are now superseded by a vivid though dramatically brief narrative in which the Jewish people are collectively saddled with the guilt of his death and the Roman government is crudely and impossibly exonerated. The apostles in general are made to play a poor part; one plays an impossible rôle of betrayer; and the legendary Judaizing apostle is made to deny his Master. The whole story is thoroughly unhistorical, from the triumphal Entry to the quasi-regal crucifixion; but it embodied the main ritual features of the traditional human sacrifice, and, there being simply no biographical record to compete with it, it held its ground. The mystery-play in its complete form was inferribly developed and played in a Gentile city; and its transcription probably coincided with its cessation as a drama. But the Sacrament was long a quasi-secret rite.

10. The picture drawn in the Acts, in which Peter and Paul alike "turn to the Gentiles"—Peter taking the initiative—is the work of a late and discreet redactor, bent on reconciling Jewish and Gentile factors. It is a highly factitious account of early Christism; but it preserves traces of the early state of things, in which no Jesuine teaching was pretended to be current, and the cult is seen to exist in a scattered form independently of the central propaganda. It evidently had a footing in Samaria. The synoptics themselves reveal the absence of baptism from the early procedure of the cult. Only in the latest of the four canonical gospels is it pretended that either Jesus or his disciples had baptized.

11. The fourth gospel is only one more systematic step in the process of myth-making. The biographical

school, in giving this up as unhistorical, in effect admits that the "personality" of the alleged Teacher had been so ineffectual as to admit of a successful interposition of a new and thoroughly mythical figure, entirely supernatural in theory, but more "impressive" as a speaking and quasi-human personage. The "Logos" of John is again an adaptation of a Jewish adaptation of a pagan conception, the doctrine of the Logos set forth by the Alexandrian Jew Philo having come through Greek and Eastern channels.<sup>1</sup> There was no critical faculty in the early Church that could secure its rejection, though it was somewhat slow of acceptance. The doctrine of the Trinity is again an assimilation from paganism, proximately Egyptian.<sup>2</sup>

Such, in outline, is our working hypothesis. As explained at the outset, it is not supposed that so complex a problem can in so brief a space and time be conclusively solved; and criticism will doubtless involve modification when criticism is scientifically applied. To such scientific criticism the production of a complete outline may be an aid; previous debate, even when rational in temper, having been spent on some of the "trees" without regard to the "wood" in general. All that is claimed for the complete hypothesis is that it is at all points inductively reached, and that for that reason it squares better with the whole facts than any form of the biographical theory—including the highly attenuated "eschatological" form in which Jesus is conceived solely as a proclaimer of "the last things." That thesis, indeed, reduces the biographical theory to complete nullity by leaving the mass of the record without any explanation save the mythical one, which suffices equally to account for eschatology.

<sup>1</sup> *P.C.* 218 sq.; *C.M.* 395.

<sup>2</sup> *P.C.* 206, 223, 228; *C.M.* 395.

## CHAPTER VIII

### SUPPLEMENTARY MYTH

#### § 1. *Myths of Healing*

It is significant that the later myth-making of the synoptics is partly by way of reversion to the folklore in which the myth had risen, partly by way of meeting non-Jewish Messianic requirements, partly by way of Gentilism, partly by way of concessions to the Gnosticism or occultism whose pretensions in the second century exercised so strong a pressure on the Church. As Professor Smith points out, the story in Mark (xiv, 51-52) of the youth who at the betrayal fled naked, leaving his linen cloth in the hands of the captors,<sup>1</sup> is a crude provision for the Docetic theory that the real Christ did not suffer. Cerinthus taught that "at last Christ departed from Jesus, and that then Jesus suffered and rose again, while Christ remained impassible, inasmuch as he was a spiritual being."<sup>2</sup>

In this connection there arises for us the problem, stressed by Professor Smith, as to the significance of the stories of wholesale healing and casting out of devils. His thesis is that they were an occult way of conveying the claim that Jesus by preaching monotheism had cast out in Galilee the diseases and corruptions of polytheism, pagan deities being "devils" for the Jew. And in view of the repeated assertion, on Gnostic lines, that

<sup>1</sup> Compare the story of Joseph, Gen. xxxix.

<sup>2</sup> Irenæus, *Against Heresies*, i, 26.

Jesus declared his teaching to be made purposely occult, so as *not* to be understood by the people, we cannot deny the possibility that some of the stories of healing may have been so intended. Professor Smith, as I understand him, argues <sup>1</sup> that a straightforward claim of wholesale overthrowing of paganism would have offended the Roman Government; and that the claim was put by metaphor to avoid that. The difficulty arises that if the metaphor was not understood by Gentiles it missed its mark with them; while if they did understand it their susceptibilities would be particularly wounded by the metaphors of leprosy and blindness and "devils." And there is the further difficulty that, as Professor Smith notes, the stories of casting out devils relate solely to half-heathen Galilee, while, as he also notes, there is no ultimate trace of Jesuism there.<sup>2</sup> Why then should an allegory of casting out polytheism have been framed concerning Galilee?

On any view, it can hardly be doubted that the stories of healing made their popular appeal as simple miracles. Professor Schmiedel's argument that the claim of Jesus (Mt. xi, 5; Lk. vii, 22) to heal blindness and lameness and leprosy, and to raise the dead, must be understood in a spiritual sense, seems to me a complete failure. He contends that if it be taken literally the final claim that "the poor have the gospel preached to them" is an anti-climax. But if we take the miracle-claims to be merely spiritual, the anti-climax is absolute; for the proposition then runs that the blind, the lame, the leprous, and the spiritually dead have the gospel preached to them, and the poor have the gospel preached to them *also*. On the other hand, there is no real anti-climax on a literal interpretation. Plainly, the pro-

<sup>1</sup> *Ecce Deus*, p. 60.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* pp. 171-2.



vision of good tidings for the merely poor, the most numerous suffering class of all, was the one thing that *could* be said to be done for them. It could not be pretended that they had been made wealthy. Thus a "pillar-text" falls, and we are left committed to the literal interpretation as against both Professor Smith and Professor Schmiedel. Both, however, will probably agree that most readers always took the literal view.<sup>1</sup>

## § 2. *Birth-Myths*

And it was to the popular credulity that appeal was made by the stories of the Annunciation, the Virgin Birth, the Adoration by the Magi and the Shepherds, the stable, the manger,<sup>2</sup> the menace of Herod, the massacre, and the flight.<sup>3</sup> The question that here arises for the mythologist is whether the birth-myths had belonged to the *early* Jesus-myth at a stage before gospel-making commenced, and had at first been ignored, only to be embodied later. For suggesting that they had been connected with the early myth I have been told by Dr. Carpenter and Dr. Conybeare that I ignored the late acceptance of the Christmas Birthday by "the Church," after I had expressly noted the late date of that acceptance. These critics, as usual, miss the whole problem.

Either the birth-stories were old lore in Syria (or

<sup>1</sup> Cp. *Ecce Deus*, p. 26.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Thorburn (*Mythical Interpretation*, p. 34) sees fit to argue that the Christian φάτνη was a "totally different thing" from the pagan λίκνον (that is, if he argues anything at all). He carefully ignores the *sculptures* which show them to be the same. (*C.M.* 192, 307.)

<sup>3</sup> Cp. Soltan on the appeal made by the story (*Birth of Jesus Christ*, Eng. tr. p. 4). "What is there," he asks, "that can be compared with this in the religious literature of any other people?" The critic should compare the literature of Krishnaism.

elsewhere in the East)<sup>1</sup> or they were not. If not, their imposition on the gospel story in the second century represents an assimilation of quite alien pagan matter, with the assent of the main body of Jewish Nazaræans, who accepted the opening chapters of the canonical Matthew. Of such an assent, no explanation can be given from the standpoint or standpoints of Dr. Conybeare and Dr. Carpenter. It would be a gratuitous capitulation to Gentilism in a Jewish atmosphere, and this without any sign on the Pauline side of a Gentile obtrusion of such matter.<sup>2</sup> But if, on the other hand, we put the hypothesis that such matter had been connected in Syrian folk-lore with the old Jesus-myth, we at once find an explanation for the additions to the gospel-story and a new elucidation of the myth-theory. The spread of the Jesus cult would bring to the front the primitive myths connected with it which the reigning Judaic sentiment had at first kept out of sight as savouring of heathenism; and all Jesus-lore would have a progressive interest for converts. Judaism, in its redacted sacred books, admitted of quasi-supernatural births in such cases as those of Sarah and Hannah; but an absolute virgin birth, a commonplace in heathen mythology,<sup>3</sup> had there no recognition. Yet the idea

<sup>1</sup> Ludwig Conrady argues (*Die Quelle der kanonischen Kindheitsgeschichte Jesus*’, 1900, p. 272 sq.) that the stories of the Infancy in the Apocryphal Gospels, which appear to be at that point the sources for Matthew and Luke, probably derive from Egypt, where the hieratic ideals of virginity were high. This may be, but the evidence is very imperfect.

<sup>2</sup> The precedents of the divine paternity of Alexander and Augustus, stressed by Soltan, would surely be inadequate. Heathen emperors would hardly be “types” for early Christians.

<sup>3</sup> The Rev. Dr. Thorburn idly argues (*Mythical Interpretation*, pp. 38-39) that such stories do not affirm parthenogenesis where a Goddess or a woman is described as married. As if Mary were not in effect so described! But in Greek mythology we have the special case of the spouse-goddess Hêrê, who is repeatedly represented as *conceiving* without congress. (*C.M.* 295.)

was as likely to survive in folk-lore in Syria as anywhere else; and as Judaism became more and more a hostile thing, Judaic views would tend in various ways to be set aside.

The hypothesis put by me is (1) that the certainly unhistorical Miriam of the Pentateuch is inferribly, like Moses and Joshua, an ancient deity; and that in old Palestinian myth she was the mother of Joshua. In the Pentateuch she is degraded, as part of the Evemeristic process of reducing the ancient popular Gods to human status. That process, which affects Goddesses as well as Gods in several ancient religions,<sup>1</sup> was for the Hebrew priesthood a necessary rule. Polytheism was everywhere, in antiquity, and for the Yahwists it must be cast out. A late Persian tradition that Joshua was the son of Miriam<sup>2</sup> accents the query whether there were no family relationships in the old Palestinian myths. That the birth in a stable, with a ritual of babe-worship at the winter or summer solstice, is very ancient both in the East and in the West, is the conclusion forced on the mythologist by a mass of evidence; and the location of the stable at Bethlehem in a cave connects the Christian myth yet further with a number of those of paganism.<sup>3</sup> If the matter of the myth was ancient for Syria, why should not the names of the mother and the child be so?

The fashion in which the hypothesis is met by the more impassioned adherents of the biographical view is instructive. Dr. Conybeare, who thinks it inconceivable that "a myth" should be mistaken for "a man,"—though that mistake is the gist of masses of mythology—finds no difficulty in conceiving that a real woman may be turned into a myth within a century. For him, the

<sup>1</sup> *P.C.* 166, note 3.

<sup>2</sup> *C.M.* 99; *P.C.* 165.

<sup>3</sup> *C.M.* 191 sq., 306 sq.

gospel "Mary" (Maria or Mariam) must be a real Jewess because in Mark (vi, 3) the people of Nazareth ask: "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James, and Joses, and Judas, and Simon? and are not his sisters with us?" Any thoughtful reader, comparing such a suddenly projected passage with the opening chapters, realizes that it is on a wholly different plane of ideas; that no one "author" can have posited both; and that the later is part of a process of localization and debate, in connection with the thesis that the healer could "do no wonder-work" at home because of the unbelief of his own people. Furthermore, in Mark xv, 40, we have the group of women which includes "Mary the mother of James the Little and of Joses," concerning whom we are told that when Jesus was in Galilee they "followed him, and ministered unto him." How many Marias, then, were mothers of James and Joses? Evidently the Mary of the latter passage is *not* regarded by its writer as the mother of Jesus. Then the prior passage is the later in order of time, and alien to the other legends.

Our exegete, nevertheless, is not only at once dogmatically certain that he has found a real Jesus, son of Mary, but proceeds to assert, in three separate passages, that in Mark's gospel Jesus is known as "the son of Joseph and Mary," though Joseph is never mentioned in that gospel. It is of a piece with his instantaneous invention of a "genuine tradition" out of a modern hint, perverted. And it is this operator who, meeting with a list of analogies (so described) which suggest that "Miriam" and "Mariam" are variants of a Mother-Goddess name generally current through the East, becomes incoherent in explosive protest, and begins by informing me that the "original form of the name is

not Maria but Miriam, which does not lend itself to [these] hardy equations." As Miriam had been expressly named and discussed by me in the very first instance, the intimation tells only of the mental disconnection which is the general mark of this writer's procedure.

The question, of course, is not philological at all; and not only was no philological "equation" ever hinted at, but the very passage attacked begins with the avowal that it is impossible to prove historical connections, and that what is in question is *analogy* of "name and epithets." Nothing in philology is more speculative than the explanation of early names. Any one who has noted the discussion over "Moses," and noted the diverging theories, from the Coptic "water-rescued" or "water-child" (*mo-use*) of Josephus and Philo and Jablonski and Deutsch to the Egyptian "child" (*mes* or *mesu*) of Lepsius and Dillmann, and the inference of an "abbreviation of a theophorous Egyptian name" drawn by Renan and Guthe, will see that there is small light to be had from "equations." When "Miriam" is expertly described as "a distortion either of Merari [misri] or of Amramith,"<sup>1</sup> the mythologist is moved to seek for other clues. The philology of Maria and Miriam is a hopeless problem.

Now, if the Moses legend is to be held Egyptian, the Miriam legend may well be so too; and in the items that the Egyptian princess who saves the child Moses is in a Jewish legend named Merris, and that one of the daughters of Ramses II is found to be named Meri,<sup>2</sup> the *analogy* is worth noting. But the central mythological fact is that a Mother-Goddess, a "Madonna" nursing a child, is one of the commonest objects of ancient worship throughout Asia and North Africa.<sup>3</sup> When, then, mothers of

<sup>1</sup> *Encyc. Bib.* art. MOSES, col. 3206.

<sup>2</sup> *C.M.* 298.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.* 167 sq.



Gods born in caves, or Dying Demigods, are found bearing such names as Myrrha and Maia; when Maia is noted to have the meaning "nurse," and Mylitta that of "the child-bearing one," we are not only moved to surmise a Mother-Goddess-name of many variants, of which Miriam-Mariam is one, but to infer a wide diffusion of legends concerning such a goddess-type. Figures of such a goddess abounded throughout the East.<sup>1</sup> That is, in brief, the mythological case at this point. Mary in the gospels, the virgin bearing a divine child, flying from danger, and bearing her child on a journey, in a cave, is the analogue of a dozen ancient myths of the Divine Child; the Menaced Child is common to the myths of Moses and Sargon, Krishna and Cyrus, Arthur and Herakles; the stable-ritual of the Adoration is prehistoric in India in connection with Krishna; the "manger" (a basket) belongs equally to the myths of Zeus, Hermes, Ion and Dionysos; and the threatening king is a myth-figure found alike in East and West.<sup>2</sup>

All this *is* ostensibly "sun-myth." And we are asked by Dr. Conybeare to believe, on the strength of one late and palpable interpolation in Mark, which has no other word concerning the childhood, parentage, or birthplace of Jesus, its Son of God, that his mother Mary was a well-known figure in Nazareth about the year 30, and that it is merely she who is made to play the mythic part in Matthew about a century later. The simple use of common-sense, even by a reader who has not studied comparative mythology, will reveal the improbability of such a development; and Dr. Conybeare, who vehemently denies, for other purposes, that the early Christians

<sup>1</sup> C.M. 168-9. Cp. Dr. G. Contenau, *La déesse nue Babylonienne*, 1914, pp. 7, 15, 16, 57, 78, 80, 101, 129, 131.

<sup>2</sup> C.M. 180-205.

in Palestine could have *any* knowledge of pagan myths, is the last person who could consistently affirm it. But when we realize that under the shell of official Judaism there subsisted in Palestine as everywhere else the folklore of the past;<sup>1</sup> when we remember the "weeping for Tammuz" at Jerusalem and the location of the birth of Adonis in the very stable-cave of the Christ-legend at Bethlehem, we can quite rationally conceive how, once the Jesus-myth was well re-established, old pre-Judaic elements of it came to the front, and found from the later gospel-compilers a welcome they could not have had in the Judaizing days.<sup>2</sup>

The Joseph myth, again, is a very obvious construction. In Mark, which Dr. Conybeare repeatedly and shrilly declares to be the primary authority, Joseph is never once mentioned, though Dr. Conybeare, with the eye of imagination, finds that he is. In Matthew, he figures throughout the birth-story of the opening section, admittedly a late addition. In Luke, still later, he is still further developed, Mark's "son of Mary" becoming (iv, 22) "the son of Joseph," in a palpably late fiction. Any critical method worthy of the name would reckon with such plain marks of late fabrication. Joseph has

<sup>1</sup> Soltau argues not only that the belief in the Virgin Birth "could not have originated in Palestine; anyhow, it could never have *taken its rise* in Jewish circles," but that "the idea that the Holy Spirit begat Jesus can have no other than a Hellenic origin" (*Birth of Jesus Christ*, Eng. trans. pp. 47-48). He forgets the "sons of God" in Genesis vi, 2. The stories of the births of Isaac and Samson inferribly had an original form less decorous than the Biblical.

<sup>2</sup> It is doubly edifying to remember that the writer who pretends to find in avowed analogies of divine names, functions, and epithets a theory of a philological "equation," himself insists on finding in every New Testament naming of a Jesus, and every pagan allusion to a "Chrestus" or "Christus," a biographical allusion to Jesus of Nazareth. For Dr. Conybeare, the Jesus of the Apocalypse and the "Chrestus" of Suetonius are testimonies to the existence of Jesus the son of Mary and Joseph. The very absurdity he seeks to find in the myth-theory is inherent in his own method.

been super-imposed on the myth for a reason; and the reason is that a Messiah "the Son of Joseph" was demanded from the Samaritan side as a Messiah the Son of David was demanded (albeit not universally) from the Judaic side.<sup>1</sup> By naming Jesus' earthly putative father Joseph, in the Davidic descent, both requirements were met, on lines of traditionalist psychology.

When this solution is met by the Unitarian thesis that the idea of a Messiah Ben Joseph is late in Judaism, and that it arose out of the gospel story, we can but appeal to the common-sense of the reader.<sup>2</sup> For the Rabbis to set up such a formula on such a motive would be an inconceivable self-stultification. The lateness of Rabbinical discussion on the subject can be quite reasonably explained through its Samaritan origination. All the while, the Joseph story in the gospels belongs precisely to that late legend which the neo-Unitarian school is bound in consistency to reject as myth. But the prepossession in favour of a "human Jesus" balks at no inconsistency, and selects its items not on critical principles but simply in so far as they can be made to compose with a "human" figure that is to be conserved at all costs.

The curious myth-motive of the "taxing"<sup>3</sup> at Bethlehem in Luke, an utterly unhistorical episode, has a remarkable parallel in the Krishna-myth,<sup>4</sup> which has been cited in support of the thesis that that myth in

<sup>1</sup> C.M. 301-2 and refs.

<sup>2</sup> The Rev. Dr. Thorburn (*Mythical Interpretation*, p. 21) cites from the *Encyc. Bib.* as "the words of Dr. Cheyne" words which are not Cheyne's at all, but those of Robertson Smith. Smith, so scientific in his anthropology, is always irrationalist in his theology.

<sup>3</sup> R.V. "enrolment." Dr. Thorburn appears to argue (p. 39) that the "taxing" story in the Krishna-myth is derived from "ignorant copying" of the *English Authorized Version*! The "to be taxed" of the A.V. of course represents the traditional interpretation—that taxing was the object of the enrolment.

<sup>4</sup> C.M. 189-90.

general is derived from the Christian story. The general thesis breaks down completely;<sup>1</sup> and in this one instance we are obviously entitled to ask whether the Christian myth is not derived from some intermediate Asiatic source connecting with the Indian.<sup>2</sup> As a mere invention to motive the birth at Bethlehem the story seems exceptionally extravagant.

### § 3. *Minor Myths*

To discuss in similar detail the myths of the Apocryphal gospels and the still later myths of Catholic Christendom would only be to extend the area of our demonstration without adding to its scientific weight. The general result would only be to prove derivations from pagan sources and to exhibit more fully the process (*a*) of inventing sayings of Jesus to vindicate different views of his Messianic and other functions, and (*b*) of enforcing ethical views by his authority. The legend of St. Christopher, for instance, is but a variant, probably iconographic in motive, of a multiform pagan myth which probably roots in a ritual of child-carrying.<sup>3</sup> Iconography yields many evidences. The conventional

<sup>1</sup> *C.M.* 273.

<sup>2</sup> I have been represented, by scholars who will not take the trouble to read the books they attack, as deriving the Christ-myth in general from the Krishna-myth. This folly belongs solely to their own imagination. Dr. Conybeare's assertion (*Histor. Christ.*, p. 69) that in my theory the Proto-Christian Joshua-God was a composite myth "made up of *memories* of Krishna . . . and a hundred other fiends," is of the same order. In his case, of course, I do not charge omission to read the statement he falsifies: it is simply a matter of his normal inability to understand any position he attacks. As regards the Krishna-myth I suggest only in the detail of the "taxing" the possibility of Christian borrowing through an intermediate source: in another, that of "the bag" which is carried by a hostile demon-follower of Krishna (*C.M.* 241-3), I suggest the possibility of Indian borrowing from the fourth gospel, where "the bag" is presumptively derived from a stage accessory in the mystery-drama, Judas carrying a bag to receive his reward.

<sup>3</sup> *C.M.* 205 sq.

figure of the Good-Shepherd carrying a sheep, which like the Birth-Story has counted for so much in popularizing Christianity, is admittedly derived from pagan art,<sup>1</sup> like the conventional angel-figure. Even the figure of Peter<sup>2</sup> as the bearer of the keys, head of the Twelve, and denier of his Lord, connects curiously with the myths of Proteus and Janus Bifrons,<sup>3</sup> both bearers of the cosmic keys.

Iconography, again, is probably the source, for the gospels, of the myth of the Temptation, which professional scholars continue solemnly to discuss as a "biographical" episode to be somehow reduced to historicity. The story coincides so absolutely with the Græco-Roman account, evidently derived from painting or sculpture, of Pan (in figure the Satan of the Jews) standing by the young Jupiter on a mountain-top before an altar,<sup>4</sup> that it might seem unnecessary to go further. But, recognizing that "of myth there is no 'original,' save man's immemorial dream," and remembering that there are similar Temptation myths concerning Buddha and Zarathustra, we are bound to extend the inquiry. The results are very interesting.

We are specially concerned with the versions of Matthew and Luke, of which Dr. Spitta, by analysis, finds the Lucan the earlier,<sup>5</sup> pronouncing the Marcan to be a curtailment and manipulation, not the primary

<sup>1</sup> C.M. 207.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* 347 sq.; Drews, *Die Petrus Legende* (pamphlet), 1910.

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Conybeare, undeviating in error, represents me (*Histor. Christ.*, p. 73) as suggesting that the epithet *bifrons* led to the invention of the story of Peter's Denial. I had expressly pointed out that the epithet *bifrons* did not carry an aspersive sense, and suggested that the figure of Janus, with its Petrine characteristics, might have inspired the story of the Denial (C.M. 350-1). The subject of iconographic myth is evidently unknown matter to Dr. Conybeare.

<sup>4</sup> C.M. 318 sq.

<sup>5</sup> *Die Versuchung Jesu* (in *Zur Gesch. und Litt. des Urchristentums*, III, ii, 1907, pp. 53, 65.



source, as was maintained by Von Harnack and many others.<sup>1</sup> The essence of the story, as episode, is the presence of the God and the Adversary on a high place, surveying "the kingdoms of the world." This originates proximately in Babylonian astronomy and astrology, where the Goat-God is represented standing beside the Sun-God on "the mountain of the world," that is, the height of the heavens, at the beginning of the sun's yearly course in the sign Capricorn, which, personified, figures as the sun's tutor and guide. Graphically represented, it is the origin of a series of Greek myths—Pan and Zeus; Marsyas and Apollo; Silenus and Dionysos—all turning on a goat-legged figure beside a young God on a mountain-top. Satan and Jesus are but another variant, probably deriving from Greek iconography, but possibly more directly from the East, where the idea of a Temptation goes back to the Vedas.

The theologians, reluctantly admitting, of late, that the Devil could not carry Jesus through the air, anxiously debate as to whether or not Jesus had strange psychic experiences which he communicated to his disciples; and, utterly ignoring comparative mythology, look for motivation, as usual, only in the Old Testament. Spitta, after checking these researches, and declaring that the man is not to be envied who hopes to explain the story by Old Testament parallels from the forty years of wandering in the wilderness,<sup>2</sup> confidently concludes that it stands for the spiritual experience of Jesus in regard to his Messianic ideal.<sup>3</sup> To such a biographical inference he has not the slightest critical right on his own principles. The gospels say nothing whatever of any communication

<sup>1</sup> The simple principle of holding Mark for primary wherever it is brief has meant many such assumptions, in which many of us once uncritically acquiesced.

<sup>2</sup> As cited, p. 85.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.* pp. 92-93.

on the subject by Jesus to his disciples. The story is myth pure and simple, and belongs to universal mythology.

Mark turned the story to the illustration of the doctrine laid down in the TESTAMENTS OF THE TWELVE PATRIARCHS,<sup>1</sup> that devils and wild beasts will flee from the righteous man; and Luke and Matthew turn it into an affirmation of the theological maxims of Jewish monotheism; but these are simply the invariable practices of the evangelists, steeped in the habits of thought of Jewish symbolism. The myth remains; and the story, as story, has counted for a great deal more in Christian popular lore than the theology. When the writer of the fourth gospel put the miracle of turning water into wine in the forefront of his work, he doubtless had symbolic intentions; <sup>2</sup> but his story is simply an adaptation of the annual Dionysiac rite of turning water into wine at the festival of the God on Twelfth Night.<sup>3</sup> It may have come either from the Greek or from the eastern side. The duplicated tale of the Feeding of the Five Thousand, again, is either an adaptation of or an attempt to excel the story of the feeding of the host of Dionysos in a waterless desert in his campaign against the Titans.<sup>4</sup> As the God had the power of miraculously producing, by touch, corn and wine and oil, his lore doubtless included miracles of feeding. The touch of the seating of the people "in ranks, by hundreds, and by fifties" (Mk. vi, 40) suggests a pictorial source.

Thus did paganism, chased out of the window of early Judaic Christianity, re-enter by all the doors, supplying the growing Church with the forms of psychic and literary attraction which ultimately served to give it a general hold over the ignorant and uncivilized masses of decadent

<sup>1</sup> Test. Naphtali, viii, 4.

<sup>3</sup> C.M. 329 sq.

<sup>2</sup> This is ably argued by Prof. Smith.

<sup>4</sup> *Id.* 335 sq.

and barbaric Europe.<sup>1</sup> Even with that machinery, the Church was dissolving in universal schism when Constantine saved it—or at least its body—by establishing it. As the Church broadened its basis, especially after its establishment, its assimilation of pagan ideas, names and practices, became so general that the process has long been made a standing ground of Protestant impeachment of the Church of Rome.<sup>2</sup> Middleton's *Letter from Rome* (1729) may be said to begin the scientific investigation, which is still going on.<sup>3</sup>

Of that process the myth-theory is simply the attempted scientific consummation. It is resisted as every previous step was resisted, before and after Middleton, partly in sincere religious conviction, partly on the simple instinctive resentment felt for every "upsetting" theory about matters which men have habitually taken for granted. Some of the best reasoned resistance comes from professional theologians who have been disciplined by the habit of exact argument in the documentary field; some of the worst, as we have seen, comes from professed rationalists or Neo-Unitarians, who bring to the problem first and last the temper of spleen and bluster which history associates with the typical priest. Bluster never settles anything: argument, given free play under conditions which foster the intellectual life, in the end settles everything, even for the emotionalists who worship their instincts. But as historical like physical science is a process of continuous expansion and reconsideration, there can in this contest be no "triumph" for anything

<sup>1</sup> Cp. Soltau, *Das Fortleben des Heidentums in d. altchr. Kirche*, 1906; *S.H.C.* 67 sq., 101 sq.; J. A. Farrer, *Paganism and Christianity*, R.P.A. rep. *passim*.

<sup>2</sup> *C.M.* 220 and note 2. Cp. W. J. Wilkins, *Paganism in the Papal Church*, 1901.

<sup>3</sup> Cp. Saint-Yves, *Les Saints successeurs des Dieux*, 1907; J. Rendel Harris, *The Dioscuri in the Christian Legends*, 1903.

but the principle of unending renewal of thought, which is but an aspect of the principle of life. Insofar as the solution now offered is inadequate, it will in due course be improved upon; insofar as it is false, it will be ousted.

The average cleric, of course, does not attempt confutation. Realizing that it is prudent to avoid debate on such matters, he relies on the proved proclivity of "human nature" to beliefs which fall-in with habit, normal emotion, and normal religiosity; and his faith is, practically speaking, not ill-grounded. A thesis which looks first and last to scientific truth is therefore not addressed to him. It is addressed to the more earnest of the laity and the clerisy—hardly to those indeed who hold, as an amiable curate once put it to me, that "in the providence of God" all heresy is short-lived; but to those who, caring for righteousness, do not on that score cast out the spirit of truth. Many such are honestly convinced that the teaching on which they have been taught to found their conceptions of goodness cannot be the accretion of a myth; and many who acknowledge an abundance of myth in the documents are still insistent on elements of "religious" truth which they find even in systematic forgeries. The countenance thus given by the more liberal and critical theologians to the more uncritical stands constantly in the way even of the acceptance of the comparatively rational views of the former.<sup>1</sup> There is reason then to ask whether the notion that human conduct is in any way dependent on visionary beliefs is any sounder than those beliefs themselves. On this head, something falls to be said in conclusion.

<sup>1</sup> Compare Soltau's remarks on the hostility still shown to professional scholars who merely reject the Virgin Birth (work cited, p. 2), and the plea of Brandt for his piety (*Die evangelische Geschichte*, Vorwort).

## CHAPTER IX

### CONCLUSION

Nor only to the myth-theory but to every attempt at ejecting historical falsity from religion there has been offered the objection that religion "does good"; that mankind needs "some religion or other"; and that to "undermine faith" does social harm, even if it be by way of driving out delusion. This position is not at all special to orthodoxy. It was taken up by Middleton; by Kant, when he shaped a "practical" basis for theistic belief after eliminating the theoretic, and counselled unbelieving clergymen to use the Bible for purposes of popular moral education; by Voltaire when he combated atheism after bombarding Christianity; and by Paine when he wrote his AGE OF REASON to save the belief in God.

Insofar as the general plea merely amounts to saying that mankind cannot conceivably give up its traditional religion at a stroke; that liberal-minded priests are better than illiberal, for all purposes; and that in a world dominated by economic need it is impossible for many enlightened clergymen to secure a living save in the profession for which they were trained, I am not at all concerned to combat it. For the liberal priest, enlightened too late to reshape his economic career, I have nothing but sympathy, provided that he in no way hampers the intellectual progress of others. Insofar, again, as the plea for "religion" is merely a plea for a word, or a thesis that all earnest conviction about life is religion, it is quite irrelevant to the present discussion.



The rationalists who feel they cannot face the world without the label of "religion" for their theory of the cosmos and of conduct will be in the same position whether they believe in a "historical Jesus" or not; and those who must have a humanist "liturgy" of some sort in place of the ecclesiastical are apparently not troubled by problems of historicity. What we are concerned with is the notion that to deny the historicity of Jesus is somehow to imperil not only ethics but historical science.

M. Loisy puts the last point in his suggestion, in criticism of Drews, that he who thinks to break down either all the traditional or the "liberal" orthodoxies by denying the historic actuality of Jesus will find he has "only furnished to their defenders the occasion to persuade a certain not uncultivated public that the divinity of Christ, or at least the unique character of his personality, is as well guaranteed as the reality of his life and his death."<sup>1</sup> Had M. Loisy then forgotten that his own attempts to elide from the documents a number of details which he saw to be mythical have given occasion to the defenders of the faith to assure a not uncultivated public that the disintegration of the gospels destroyed all ground for belief in any part of them?<sup>2</sup>

We on this side of the Channel might meet such challenges, grounded on the susceptibilities of the "public," with the demand of our great humorist, Mr. Birrell: "What, in the name of the Bodleian, has the general public got to do with literature? The general public . . . has its intellectual, like its lacteal sustenance, sent round to it in carts."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Apropos d'histoire des religions*, end.

<sup>2</sup> Compare the recent volume of debate between Dr. Sanday and the Rev. N. P. Williams on *Form and Content in the Christian Tradition*. Mr. Williams argues against Dr. Sanday—who is less destructive in his criticism than M. Loisy—in this very fashion.

<sup>3</sup> Essay on Dr. Johnson (1884).

But we must not turn the jest to earnest. There are plenty of honest laymen to play the jury; and to them let it be put. The issue between us and M. Loisy, as he virtually admits, must be fought out by argument. It is perfectly true, as he says, that "in principle, nothing is more legitimate, more necessary, than the comparative method; but nothing is more delicate to handle."<sup>1</sup> Every issue, then, must be vigilantly debated. But the obligation is reciprocal. In these inquiries we have found M. Loisy many times in untenable positions, and resorting to inconsistent arguments. The tests which he applies to a mass of tradition are equally destructive to most of what he retains.

Let illicit employments of the comparative method be discredited by all means; but let us also have done with a criticism which on one leaf claims that Jesus gave a "homogeneous" teaching which his disciples could not have "combined," and on the next avows that "the gospel ethic is no more consistent than the hope of the kingdom."<sup>2</sup> And when the myth-theorists are called upon to make no unwarranted assumptions, let us also have an end of such assertions as that "twenty-five or thirty years after the death of Jesus the principal sentences and parables of which the apostolic generation had kept memory were put in writing."<sup>3</sup> This is pure hypothesis, unsupported by evidence.

The issue between us and M. Loisy, once more, is not one in which merely he assails the myth-theory as out-going its proofs: it is one in which *his* positions are at the same time assailed all along the line, and particularly at its centre, as incapable of resisting critical pressure. By all means let us seek that "the science of religion should be applied without preoccupations of contemporary propaganda or polemic." The present writer

<sup>1</sup> *Apropos d'histoire des religions*, p. 320.

<sup>2</sup> *Jésus et la trad. évang.* pp. 286, 288.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.* p. 277.

reached the myth-theory not by way of propaganda but as a result of sheer protracted failure to establish a presupposed historical foundation. Professor Smith disclaims all criticism of "Christianity." And if Professor Drews be blamed for avowing a religious aim, the answer is that he would otherwise be assailed as "irreligious," alike in his own country and elsewhere. The myth-theory has to meet other foes than M. Loisy.

It is remarkable that Professor Schmiedel, who has gone nearly as far as M. Loisy in recognizing in detail the force of the pressures on the historical position, makes the avowal: "My inmost religious convictions would suffer no harm, even if I now felt obliged to conclude that *Jesus never lived*,"<sup>1</sup> though as a critical historian he "sees no prospect of this." He further avows that his religion does not require him "to find in Jesus an absolutely perfect model," and that in effect he does not find him so.<sup>2</sup> And he wrote in 1906 that "for about six years the view that Jesus never really lived has gained an ever-growing number of supporters,"<sup>3</sup> adding that "it is no use to ignore it, or to frame resolutions against it." It is accordingly with no kind of polemic motive as against so entirely candid a writer that I suggest certain criticisms of his emotional positions as tending unconsciously to affect his judgment of the critical problem.

It is after the avowals above cited that he writes:—<sup>4</sup>

Nor do I ask whether in Jesus' faith and ethical system what he had to offer was new. *Was it able to give me something that would warm my heart and strengthen my life?*—that is all I ask. What does it matter if one of the ideas of Jesus had been expressed once already in India, another once already in Greece, a third once already, or many times, by the Old Testament prophets, or by the much-praised Jewish Rabbis shortly before the time of

<sup>1</sup> *Jesus in Modern Criticism*, p. 85.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.* p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* p. 86.

<sup>4</sup> *Id.* p. 87.

Jesus? Such ideas may be found in books: that is all. What we ought to feel grateful to Jesus for, is that he was *destined for the first time to make the ideas take effect and influence the lives of mankind in general.*

It would, I think, be difficult to over-estimate the amount of psychic bias involved in that pronouncement, which contains a theorem no more fitly to be taken for granted than any concrete historic proposition. The Professor, it will be observed, does not specify a single teaching of Jesus as new, while admitting that *some* were not. What he says is, in effect, that other utterances of Jesuine doctrines do not "warm the heart"; that those of Jesus do; and that they "for the first time" caused certain doctrines to "take effect and influence the lives of mankind in general." *What* doctrines then are meant, and what effects are posited? And *why* do other utterances of the doctrines not "warm the heart"?

Presumably the doctrines in question are those of mutual love, of forgiveness of enemies, of doing as we would be done by. Concerning the gospel doctrine of reward the Professor makes a disclaimer; and concerning the doctrine that God cares for men as for the lilies and the birds he pronounces that it is "to-day not merely untrue: it is not even religious in the deepest sense of the term."<sup>1</sup> It is not then clear that he would acclaim the doctrine that to help the distressed is to succour the Lord. In any case, the detailed religious prescription of beneficence was not merely a Jewish maxim: it was an article of Egyptian religion;<sup>2</sup> and it can hardly be in respect of such teaching that the Professor affirms a new "influence on the lives of mankind in general."

Is it then in respect of mutual love and the forgiveness of enemies? If so, when did the change begin? Among the apostles? Among the Fathers? Among the bishops?

<sup>1</sup> *Jesus in Modern Criticism*, pp. 79-81.

<sup>2</sup> *C.M.* 392.

Among the Popes? To put the issue broadly, was there more of good human life in Byzantium than in pagan Greece; or even in the Rome of the Decadence and the Dark and Middle Ages than in the Rome of the Republic? Was it because of Christian goodness that the decline of Rome was accelerated instead of being checked? And, to come to our own day, is the World War an evidence for an ethical change wrought by the teaching of Jesus—a war forced on the world by a Germany where there are more systematic students of the gospels than in all the rest of Europe? I leave it to Professor Schmiedel and Professor Drews to settle the point between them. They would perhaps agree—though as to this I am uncertain—on the Jesuine doctrine that morality is “nothing more than obedience to the will of God”; and that “every deed is to be judged by the standard, Will it bear the gaze of God?”<sup>1</sup> In any case I will affirm, for the consideration of those who on any such ground cling to the notion of something unique in the teaching of Jesus, that humanity is likely to make a much better world when it substitutes for such a moral standard, which is but a self-deluding substitution of God for the conscience that delimits God, the principle of goodwill towards men, and the law of reciprocity, articulately known to the mass of mankind millenniums before the Christian era, and all along disobeyed, then as now, partly because religious codes intervene between it and life.<sup>2</sup>

If it be admitted—and who will considerably deny it?—that the moral progress of mankind is made in virtue of recognition of the law of reciprocity, the case for the general moral influence of Christianity is disposed of,

<sup>1</sup> *C.M.* p. 90.

<sup>2</sup> So far as I am aware, the only explicit condemnation passed in the German Reichstag on the German submarine policy has been delivered by the Socialist Adolf Hoffmann, a professed Freethinker. He pronounced it “shameful,” and was duly called to order.



once for all. If the affirmation be still made, let it confront the challenge of rational sociology,<sup>1</sup> founded on the survey of all history—and the World War. Professor Schmiedel's large affirmation is vain in the face of all that. His real psychic basis, which in my judgment determines his critical presuppositions, lies in the phrase: "warms my heart." And that phrase is a tacit confession of religious partisanship, the result of his Christian training.<sup>2</sup>

The more the moral teaching of the gospels is comparatively studied, as apart from their myths of action and dogma, the more clear becomes its *entire* dependence on previous lore,<sup>3</sup> and its failure even to maintain the level of the best of that. The Sermon on the Mount is *wholly* pre-Christian.<sup>4</sup> It is a Christian scholar who points out that the Christian doctrine of forgiveness is fully set forth in the TESTAMENTS OF THE TWELVE PATRIARCHS, a century before the Christian era. In his view, those verses<sup>5</sup> "contain the most remarkable statement on the subject of forgiveness in all ancient literature."<sup>6</sup> Why then does it not warm the heart of Professor Schmiedel equally with the doctrine of the gospels? Simply because he was brought up to assign pre-eminence to the teaching of Jesus—God or Man. And here we have, in its fundamental form, that unchecked assumption of "uniqueness" which secretly dictates the bulk of the denials of the myth-theory. Canon Charles explicitly traces the Jesuine teaching to the verses in question:

That our Lord was acquainted with them, and that His teaching presupposes them, we must infer from the fact that the parallel is so perfect in thought and so close in diction between them and Luke xvii, 3; Matt. xvii,

<sup>1</sup> I have briefly put the case in pref. to *S.H.C.*

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Rendel Harris, on the other hand, in effect avows that his heart is warmed by fictitious "Odes of Solomon," in which the writer puts imaginary language in the mouth of the Christ.

<sup>3</sup> See J. McCabe, *Sources of the Morality of the Gospels*, R.P.A., 1914.

<sup>4</sup> *C.M.* 403 sq.    <sup>5</sup> *Test. Gad*, vi, 1-7.    <sup>6</sup> Canon Charles, *in loc.*

15.<sup>1</sup> The meaning of forgiveness in both cases is the highest and noblest known to us. . . .

One puts with diffidence the challenge, Was it then high and noble for the Teacher to give out as his own the teaching of another, instead of acknowledging it? Is it not incomparably more likely, on every aspect of the case, that the older teaching was thus appropriated by gospel-makers bent at once on giving the Divine One a high message and on securing acceptance for it by putting it in his mouth? Is not this the strict critical verdict, apart from any other issue?

The bias which balks at such a decision is the sign of the harm done to intellectual ethic by the inculcated presupposition. It ought to "warm the heart" of a good man to realize that the ideas which he has been taught to think the noblest were not the "unique" production of a Superman,<sup>1</sup> but could be and were reached by Jews and Gentiles—for they are Gentile also—whose very names are unknown to us. A doctrine of forgiveness arose in prostrate Jewry precisely because rancour had there reached its maximum. As a doctrine of asceticism rises in a society where license has been at the extreme, so the phenomena of hate breed a recoil from that. The doctrine of non-resistance was current among the Pharisees of the period of the Maccabean revolt; and the TESTAMENTS OF THE PATRIARCHS is the work of a Pharisee. And the gospels have nevertheless taught all Christians to regard the Pharisees collectively, with the Scribes, as a body devoid of all goodness. There is, be it said—not for the first time—a pessimism in the Christian conception of things; a pessimism which denies the element of goodness in man in the very act of ascribing it as a specialty to One, and relying on his "influence" to spread it among men

<sup>1</sup> There are many such close parallels of thought and diction between the two books. See Canon Charles's introduction, § 26.

incapable of rising to it for themselves. The story of Lycurgus and Alcander is the best ancient example to the precept, quite transcending that of the good Samaritan,<sup>1</sup> and it is one of the antidotes to the Christian pessimism which stultifies its own parable by denying in effect that The Samaritan could *think* as ethically as The Jew.

It is pessimism, yet again, that accepts the verdict: "Christianity is the truth of humanity."<sup>2</sup> Were it not that Dr. Schmiedel endorses it, I should have been inclined to use a stronger term. This too is myth-making. It would be strange indeed if any depth of truth were sounded by men who had not the first elements of a conscience for truth of statement, truth of history: whose very notion of truth was a production of fiction. The "truth of humanity" is something infinitely wider than the structure raised by the "prophets" and "apostles" of the Jesus-cult, out of pre-existing materials, some two thousand years ago; and humanity will outlive that presentment of its cosmos and its destinies as it has outlived others. If it should carry something of the one with it, so does it from the others—even as the one drew from its predecessors; and it will certainly jettison more than it will keep. I have not noted in the TESTAMENTS OF THE PATRIARCHS any such nullification of its doctrine of forgiveness as is embodied in the promise of future perdition for Chorazin and Bethsaida, or in the story of Ananias and Sapphira, to say nothing of the Jesuine doctrine of future torment. The hate that breathes in "Ye brood of vipers"; in the continual malediction

<sup>1</sup> In *The Historical Jesus*, pp. 23-26, I had to point out how two Doctors of Divinity, of high pretensions, had scornfully denied that that story had ever been transcended, and how signally they erred. The second, the Rev. Dr. T. J. Thorburn, has since produced another work, in which the subject is carefully ignored. When theologians thus exhibit themselves as morally colour-blind, they relieve us of the necessity of proving at any length how congenitally incompetent they are to determine the moral problems of sociology by the authority they presume to flaunt.

<sup>2</sup> Schmiedel, *Jesus*, end.

against Scribes and Pharisees as universally hypocrites, "sons of Gehenna," making their proselytes twice as bad as themselves; and in the Johannine "your father the devil"—all these are "Christian" specialties, turning to naught the Jewish precept of forgiveness.

And I can "see no prospect" of a long currency for Professor Schmiedel's panegyric of fictitious sayings in Acts <sup>1</sup> as "of the deepest that can be said about the inner Christian life." If that be so, what amount of profundity goes to the whole construction of the faith? How long is it to be maintained that the secret or inspiration of good life lies in the ideas of men for whom the framing of false history was a pious occupation? The main ethical content of the Christian system, the moral doctrine by which the Church has lived down till the other day, is the ethic-defying doctrine of the redemption of mankind by a blood sacrifice—a survival of immemorial savagery. That is still the specifically "evangelical" view of Christianity. After living by the doctrine through two eras, the slowly civilizing conscience of the Church has itself begun to repudiate it; and we have the characteristic spectacle of its defenders declaring that the very terms of the historic creed form a libel framed by its enemies. Taught at last by human reason that the doctrine of sacrifice is the negation of morality, they pretend that that doctrine is not Christian. Without it, their Church would never have taken its historic form. To eliminate it, they have to suppress half their literature, prose and verse. The accommodations by which the fundamental immorality has been modified in the interests of saner morality are but the dictates of human experience; and these dictates are in turn pretended to be the revelation of the faith that flouted them.

<sup>1</sup> Art. Acts in *Encyc. Bib.*, citing iv, 20; xiv, 22; xx, 24; xxi, 13; xxiv, 16.

Unless the world is again to retrogress collectively in its civilization, this polemic will not long avail to obscure historic issues. It is not merely the "religion" of Professor Drews, it is the emancipated human reason, that denies the mortmain of ancient Syria over the field of ethical thought, and claims the birthright of modern man in his own moral law. Not one day has passed since the penning of the Apocalypse without men's hating each other in the name of Jesus. Wars generations long have been waged for interpretations of the lore. Hatred and malice and all uncharitableness stamp all the Sacred Books; and the literature of the Fathers imports into the dwindling intellectual life of the West all the rancour of battling Judaism. In our own day, Professor Schmiedel is malignantly assailed in the name of the divinity of the figure of which he claims to prove the exemplary humanity, his reasoned argument winning him no goodwill from the supernaturalists. And around him there figure virulent partisans, incapable of his candour, so little capable of love for enemies that they cannot conduct a debate without passion, perversion and insolence. A multitude of those who acclaim the gospel Jesus as the supreme Teacher reveal themselves as below the standards of normal candour.

From such pretenders to moral authority, the seeker for truth turns to the layman similarly concerned, and to those professional scholars who are capable of debating without passion, and in good faith. Professor Schmiedel and M. Loisy are still, it is to be hoped, types of many. The problem is in the end, unalterably, one of historical science; and only by the use of all the methods of sound historical science will it ever be solved.

It is not merely in regard to the study of Christian origins that sociological problems are vitiated by the habitual passing of *à priori* judgments on issues never critically considered. When an expert hierologist like



Dr. Budge tells us repeatedly that in ancient Egypt a "highly spiritual," "lofty spiritual" and "elevated" religion went hand in hand with a system of sorcery of "degrading" savagery,<sup>1</sup> we are led to inquire how the estimates of altitude are reached or justified. There appears to be no answer save that Dr. Budge holds certain theories about the universe, and, finding these more or less akin to the esoteric theology of Egypt, laud his own opinions in this fashion. But Dr. Budge is no more entitled than any one else to settle such questions without rational discussion, and the reason of some of us revolts at the concept of a conjoined sublimity and imbecility as a spurious paradox. It is but a convention of supernaturalist apriorism, figuring where it has no right of entry. In precisely the same fashion, Dr. Estlin Carpenter credits to the Aztecs a "lofty religious sentiment," avowed to be "strangely blended with a hideous and sanguinary ritual."<sup>2</sup> The "lofty" is again a wreath for the writer's own philosophy of religion, in terms of which the act of the "good Samaritan," performed a million times by unpretending human beings, was *imaginable* only by a supernormal Jew, and unmatched in pagan thought.

In a word, these moral pretensions had better be withdrawn from the area of historical discussion proper. Involving as they do the inference that "lofty" religious conceptions are not merely of no moral value but potent sanctions for all manner of evil, they very effectually stultify themselves. But rationalism needs not, and should not seek, to turn such blunders to its account. As M. Loisy claims, the ground of historic criticism is not the place for such polemic, which tends only to confuse the scientific issue. That is hard enough to solve, with the best will and the best methods.

<sup>1</sup> *Egyptian Magic*, 1899, pref.    <sup>2</sup> *Comparative Religion*, 1912, p. 57.

## APPENDIX A

### THE "TEACHING OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES"

(Nov. 1 and 8, 1891.)

[THE following is a revised translation of the *Διδαχὴ τῶν δώδεκα ἀποστόλων*, discovered by Philotheos Bryennios, Metropolitan of Nicomedia (then of Serres), in 1873, in the library attached to the Monastery of the Most Holy Sepulchre, in the Phanar, or Greek quarter, of Constantinople. It was part of a manuscript containing several ancient documents, including two Epistles of Clement of Rome, which Bryennios published in 1875. Not till 1883 did he publish the *Didachê*.

Of the genuineness of the MS. there can be no reasonable doubt. That there was current in the early Church a "Teaching of the Twelve Apostles" appears from Eusebius (*H. E.* iii, 25) and Athanasius (*Festal Epistle* 39, C.E. 367). There were very good reasons why the Church, as time went on, should desire to drop the *Teaching* from her current literature. It is obviously in origin a purely Jewish document, and the first six chapters show no trace of Jesuism. We have already stated the reasons for concluding that the primary "Teaching" was the official doctrine of the twelve *Jewish* apostles of the High Priest to the Jews dispersed through the Roman Empire; that the Gospels borrowed from it, and not the converse; that Judaic Jesuists adopted it, and gradually interpolated it; and that it is the real foundation of the legend of the twelve Jesuist apostles. The sub-title: "Teaching of [the] Lord through the Twelve Apostles to the Nations" may have been the original. "Lord" here has the force of "God."

On a first study, we found reasons <sup>1</sup> for deciding that the

<sup>1</sup> Set forth in the *National Reformer*, May 15, 1887. Barnabas in effect avows that he is copying previous teaching.

Epistle of Barnabas, which in part closely coincides with the "Teaching," borrows from it, and not the converse. That view, though naturally opposed by many orthodox scholars, who want to date the Teaching as late as possible, was from the first, we find, put by Farrar and by Zahn, and is convincingly maintained by the American editors, though of course they take the conventional view that the document is of Christian origin. Yet its Græco-Jewish origin, we feel certain, will be plain to every open-minded reader at the first perusal. That view was maintained by the Rev. Dr. C. Taylor, of St. John's College, Cambridge, in two lectures given at the Royal Institution in 1886; and it has been accepted by Dr. Salmon in his *Introduction to the Study of the New Testament*. It was admitted to be probable by the Rev. A. Gordon, in the *Modern Review*, July, 1884, but rejected by the American editors (1885).

We have followed, with but few serious variations, the translation of the American editors, Professors Hitchcock and Brown, which, on careful comparison, we find to be the most faithful. Reasons for the main variations are given in the notes. Of the elucidatory notes, some are borrowed (with additions) from the American and French editions. The English student may refer to the edition of Professors Hitchcock and Brown, or to that of Canon Spence (1885), for the literature of the matter. Needless to say, the clerical reasoning on the matter must be viewed with constant caution.]

#### TEACHING OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES

##### TEACHING OF [THE] LORD, THROUGH THE TWELVE APOSTLES, TO THE NATIONS <sup>1</sup>

Chap. I.—Two ways there are, one of life and one of death, and great is the difference between the two ways.<sup>2</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> There are two titles. It is surmised, with good reason, that this was the original, though Mr. Gordon argues that it may be Sabellian, and of the third or fourth century. The "Lord" (the name is here used without the article, which was normally used in Christian writings) refers to the God of the Jews, not to Jesus.

<sup>2</sup> A pagan as well as a Jewish commonplace. Cp. Jeremiah xxi, 8; Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 285 sq.; Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, ii, 1;

way of life, then, is this : First, thou shalt love the God who made thee ; secondly, thy neighbour as thyself ;<sup>1</sup> and all things whatsoever thou wouldest not have befall thee, thou, too, do not to another.<sup>2</sup> And of these words the teaching is this : Bless them that curse you, and pray for your enemies, and fast for them that persecute you ;<sup>3</sup> for what thank [have ye] if ye love them that love you ? Do not foreigners<sup>4</sup> do the same ? But love ye them that hate you and ye shall have no enemy. Abstain from the fleshly and worldly lusts.<sup>5</sup> If any one give thee a blow on the right cheek, turn to him the other also, and thou shalt be perfect ;<sup>6</sup> if any one compel thee to go one mile, go with him twain ; if any one take thy cloak, give him thy tunic also ; if any one take from thee what is thine, ask it not back ; for indeed thou canst not.<sup>7</sup> To every one that asketh thee give, and ask not back ; for to all the Father desireth to have given of his own free gifts.<sup>8</sup> Blessed is he that giveth according to the commandment ;

Persius, Sat. iii, 56. Persius followed Pythagoras, who taught that the ways of virtue and vice were like the thin and thick lines of the letter Y. This is the origin of the Christian formula of the broad and the narrow path. The conception of "the right way" is found among the ancient Persians. Meyer, *Geschichte des Alterthums*, i, 539 (§ 448).

<sup>1</sup> Cp. Levit. xix, 18 ; Matt. xxii, 37-39.

<sup>2</sup> Cp. Tobit iv, 15 ; Matt. vii, 12. Hillel (Talmud, *Sabbath*, 306) puts the rule, as here, in the sane negative form, which is also the Chinese. The gospel form is less rational. The sentiment is the first principle of morals, and is common to all religions and all races.

<sup>3</sup> Cp. Matt. v, 44 ; Prov. xxv, 21 ; Talmud refs. in *C.M.* 406 ; and *Test. of Twelve Patr.* Dan. iii, iv ; Gad, iii-vi. Canon Spence notes that the resemblance between the *Testaments* and the *Didachê* is "very marked." Note that in the Revised Version the text in Matthew is cut down—a recognition of tampering, in imitation of Luke vi, 27-8.

<sup>4</sup> Gr. "the nations" = "the Gentiles." Here, as elsewhere, we render by an English idiom, which gives the real force of the original. It will be observed that the compilers of the first gospel (v, 46) substitute "tax-gatherers" for the original, by way of applying the discourse to Jews in Palestine, where the tax-gatherers represented foreign oppression.

<sup>5</sup> A probable interpolation.

<sup>6</sup> Cp. Lament. iii, 30, and the pagan parallels cited by Mr. McCabe, *Sources of Mor. of Gospels*, pp. 229, 231.

<sup>7</sup> This clause, which is not in Matthew, is intelligible only as an exhortation to Jews in foreign lands. The reference to 1 Cor. vi, 1, cannot make it plausible as a Christian utterance.

<sup>8</sup> This is otherwise translated by the Rev. Mr. Heron, *Church of the Sub-Apostolic Age*, p. 16, thus : "the Father wisheth men to give to all from their private portion" ; and by Dr. Taylor, *Teaching*, 1886, p. 122, thus : "the Father wills that to all men there be given of our own free gifts."

for he is guiltless; woe to him that receiveth;<sup>1</sup> for if, indeed, one receiveth who hath need, he shall be guiltless; but he who hath no need shall give account, why he took, and for what purpose, and coming under confinement,<sup>2</sup> shall be examined concerning what he did, and shall not go out thence until he pay the last farthing. And it hath also been said concerning this: Let thine alms sweat in thy hands, until thou knowest to whom thou shouldst give.<sup>3</sup>

Chap. II.—And a second commandment of the teaching is: Thou shalt not kill, nor commit adultery, nor corrupt boys, nor commit fornication, nor steal, nor do magic, nor use sorcery, nor slay a child by abortion, nor destroy what is conceived. Thou shalt not lust after the things of thy neighbour, nor forswear thyself, nor bear false witness, nor revile, nor be revengeful, nor be double-minded or double-tongued; for a snare of death is the double tongue. Thy speech shall not be false, nor empty, but filled with doing. Thou shalt not be covetous, nor rapacious, nor a hypocrite, nor malicious, nor arrogant. Thou shalt not take evil counsel against thy neighbour. Thou shalt hate no man, but some thou shalt reprove, and for some thou shalt pray, and some thou shalt love above thy life.

Chap. III.—My child, flee from every evil thing, and from everything like it. Be not wrathful, for anger leadeth to murder;<sup>4</sup> nor a zealot,<sup>5</sup> nor contentious, nor passionate;

<sup>1</sup> Cp. Acts xx, 35. That passage probably derives from this, and loses point in the transference.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Heron renders this "under discipline," because the early Church had no prison for its backsliders. Quite so. The reference is to Pagan prisons, and the warning is to Jewish beggars. The Greek phrase, ἐν συνοχῇ, here clearly refers to a prison, though in Luke xxi, 25, it is rendered "distress" and in 2 Cor. ii, 4, "anguish." Cp. Josephus, 8 Ant. iii, 2. Canon Spence, who translates "being in sore straits," offers the alternative "coming under arrest."

<sup>3</sup> Cp. Ecclesiasticus, xii, 1 sq. It will be observed that the concluding clause modifies the earlier precept of indiscriminate giving. It may be an addition.

<sup>4</sup> A more developed teaching is found in the *Testaments of the Patriarchs*, as above cited.

<sup>5</sup> Gr. ζήλωτης. The American editors translate this "jealous"; but Mr. Heron and Dr. Taylor more faithfully render it "a zealot," though this, a natural warning to Jews, would come oddly to Christians. "Zealot" specified a fanatical Jewish type (Luke vi, 15; Acts i, 13; xxi, 20), but the Jesuits were exhorted to be "zealous" (same word) in 1 Cor. xiv, 12; Tit. ii, 14. Nowhere are Christian "zealots" rebuked; but Jewish fanatics in foreign lands needed warning from peace-loving teachers. On the other hand, the rendering "jealous" is evidently adopted because of the very difficulty of conceiving that



for of all these murders are begotten. My child, become not lustful; for lust leadeth to fornication; nor foul-mouthed, nor bold of gaze;<sup>1</sup> for of all these things adulteries are begotten. My child, become not an omen-watcher;<sup>2</sup> since it leadeth into idolatry; nor an enchanter, nor an astrologer, nor a purifier,<sup>3</sup> nor be willing to look upon these things; for of all these things idolatry is begotten. My child, become not a liar; since lying leadeth to theft; nor avaricious, nor vain-glorious; for of all these things thefts are begotten. My child, become not a murmurer; since it leadeth to blasphemy; nor self-willed, nor evil-minded; for of all these things blasphemies are begotten. But be meek, since the meek shall inherit the earth.<sup>4</sup> Become long-suffering and merciful and guileless and gentle and good, and tremble continually at the words which thou hast heard. Thou shalt not exalt thyself, nor allow over-boldness to thy soul. Thy soul shall not cleave to the great,<sup>5</sup> but with the righteous and lowly thou shalt consort. The experiences that befall thee shalt thou accept as good, knowing that without God nothing happeneth.

Chap. IV.—My child, him that speaketh to thee the word of God thou shalt remember night and day,<sup>6</sup> and honour him as [the] Lord; for where that which pertaineth to the Lord<sup>7</sup> is spoken there [the] Lord is. And thou shalt seek out daily the faces of the saints, that thou mayest be refreshed by their words. Thou shalt not desire division, but shall make peace between those who contend; thou shalt judge justly; thou shalt not respect persons in reproving for transgressions. Thou shalt not hesitate<sup>8</sup> whether it shall be or not. Be not one who for receiving stretcheth out the hands, but for giving

Christian teachers would warn their flocks against being either “zealous” or “zealots.” The context, however, clearly justifies our translation.

<sup>1</sup> Gr. “high-eyed.” The meaning evidently is “always looking at people,” and there is implied the injunction to look down, as is the wont of nuns. Since deciding on the rendering given, we notice that the Rev. A. Gordon, in his translation (sold at Essex Hall, Essex Street), has “bold of eye.” Dr. Taylor has “of high looks.”

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Gordon has “a diviner from birds”; M. Sabatier “*augure*”; Dr. Taylor “given to augury.”

<sup>3</sup> Mr. Gordon has “a fire lustrator.”

<sup>4</sup> Cp. Matt. v, 5.

<sup>5</sup> Gr. “the high” = the upper or ruling classes.

<sup>6</sup> Cp. Heb. xiii, 7.

<sup>7</sup> Gr. ἡ κυριότης. Messrs. Gordon and Heron render “whence the lordship is spoken” or “proclaimed.” In the New Testament (Eph. i, 21; Col. i, 16; Jude viii; 2 Pet. ii, 10) the same word is rendered “dominion” by the Revisers.

<sup>8</sup> Mr. Gordon adds here “in praying” in brackets. This is a guess, which seems to have no warrant, though Canon Spence leans to it. The sentence connects with the preceding one.

draweth them in; if thou hast anything, by thy hands thou shalt give a ransom for thy sins.<sup>1</sup> Thou shalt not hesitate to give, nor when giving shalt thou murmur, for thou shalt know who is the good dispenser of the recompense. Thou shalt not turn away from the needy, but shalt share all things with thy brother, and shalt not say they are thine own; for if ye are partners in that which is imperishable, how much more in the perishable things? <sup>2</sup> Thou shalt not take off thy hand from thy son and from thy daughter,<sup>3</sup> but from youth shalt thou teach them the fear of God. Thou shalt not lay commands in thy bitterness upon thy slave or girl-slave, who hope in the same God, lest they perchance shall not fear the God over you both; for he cometh not to call men according to the appearance, but to those whom the spirit hath prepared. And ye, slaves, ye shall be subject to your lords, as to God's image,<sup>4</sup> in modesty and fear. Thou shalt hate every hypocrisy, and whatever is not pleasing to the Lord. Thou shalt by no means forsake [the] Lord's commandments, but shall keep what thou hast received, neither adding to it nor taking from it. In church thou shalt confess thy transgressions, and shalt not draw near for thy prayer with an evil conscience. This is the way of life.

Chap. V.—But the way of death is this: First of all it is evil, and full of curse; murders, adulteries, lusts, fornications, thefts, idolatries, magic arts, sorceries, robberies, false testimonies, hypocrisies, duplicity, guile, arrogance, malice, self-will, greed, foul speech, jealousy,<sup>5</sup> over-boldness, haughtiness, boasting; persecutors of the good, hating truth, loving falsehood, knowing not the reward of righteousness, not cleaving to that which is good nor to righteous judgment, on the watch not for good but for evil; far from whom are meekness and patience; loving vanities, seeking reward,<sup>6</sup> not pitying a poor man, not grieving with one <sup>7</sup> in distress, not knowing

<sup>1</sup> Cp. Dan. iv, 27; *Test. Patr.* Zabulon, viii.

<sup>2</sup> Cp. Acts iv, 32. Here we seem to have the hint for the legend.

<sup>3</sup> Cp. Prov. xiii, 24; xxii, 15; xxiii, 13-14; xxix, 17; Eccclus. vii, 23-4; xxx, 1-2. A common Jewish sentiment, not found in the New Testament. Cp. Eph. vi, 4.

<sup>4</sup> Or type. Here, as in the New Testament, there is not the faintest pretence of impugning slavery. The resistance to that began among Pagans, not among Jews or Christians.

<sup>5</sup> Gr. *ζηλοτυπία*. This is the normal Greek word for jealousy. Here, however, Mr. Heron has "envy," perhaps rightly.

<sup>6</sup> The American editors have "pursuing revenge."

<sup>7</sup> So Mr. Heron, we think rightly. M. Sabatier agrees. The American editors have "toiling for," and Mr. Gordon "labouring for."

him that made them, murderers of children, destroyers of God's image,<sup>1</sup> turning away from the needy, oppressing the afflicted, advocates of the rich, lawless judges of the poor, universal sinners; may ye be delivered, children, from all these.

Chap. VI.—See that no one lead thee astray from this way of the teaching, because apart from God doth he teach thee. For if thou art able to bear the whole yoke of the Lord, thou shalt be perfect; but if thou art not able, what thou art able that do. And concerning food, what thou art able, bear; but of that offered to idols, beware exceedingly; for it is a worship of dead Gods.

[It will be observed that while there is a very marked transition after ch. vi, a division may be held to begin after ch. v. In this connection may be noted an interesting fact, brought out by the Rev. A. Gordon in his examination of the *Didachê*. Nicephoros of Constantinople (fl. 750–820) knew of a certain *Teaching of the Apostles*, which he mentioned as containing 200 lines. Nicephoros also speaks of the combined lengths of the two Epistles of Clement as amounting to 2,600 lines. Now, in the Jerusalem MS., which is closely written, the Clementine Epistles occupy only 1,200 lines, which would give for the *Didachê*, in the same writing, on the proportions mentioned by Nicephoros, only 92 lines, whereas it occupies 203. Mr. Gordon simply noted the fact as a difficulty. If however he had followed up his own observation that the *Didachê* shows a division after the fifth chapter, he would have found that the proportion of the first five sections to the rest is nearly as 86 to 203; while with ch. vi we should have a still closer approximation—88 to 203. We have here, then, a virtual proof that Nicephoros had before him only these first five or six chapters, and that the subsequent additions were not to be found in all copies of the *Teaching*. The inference from the internal evidence is thus remarkably confirmed. The original *Teaching*, once more, was a purely Jewish document, without even a mention of Jesus.

It will be noted further that, while the first six chapters

<sup>1</sup> Or, handiwork.

contain no suggestion of anything beyond simple monotheism and general ethics, and the sixth chapter ends with a warning against eating food offered to idols, the seventh suddenly plunges into a prescription of baptism, which introduces the formula of "the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit," and minutely provides for the manner of the ceremony. But the eighth chapter evidently connects directly with the sixth, a direction as to fasting following on the warning in that section against eating meat offered to idols. It is thus perfectly clear that the entire Trinitarian section on baptism is an interpolation. In the eighth chapter, again, we have an interpolation of the words "as the Lord commanded in his gospel." In *C.M.* (415 *sq.*) are set forth the weighty reasons for concluding that the Lord's prayer, which is lacking in Mark, and different in Luke, was a Jewish formula long before the Christian era.

While the Christist interpolations are thus obvious after the sixth chapter, it is not here assumed that the first six chapters as they stand are a single original document. On the contrary, we are inclined to think that the scheme of the "two ways" is itself a redaction of an original document which gave the first "way" without preamble, the present preamble and the fifth chapter being inserted to give the dual form. On that view, the pre-Christian document may not have stopped with the sixth chapter, though the definitely Christian redaction begins with the seventh, as the document now stands. The Trinitarian seventh chapter was almost certainly one of the latest of the Christian additions. In the ninth, rules are laid down for the Eucharist without any allusion to the Godhead of Jesus, who is spoken of in Ebionitic terms as "Jesus thy servant," though Jesus Christ is further on spoken of in more distinctly Christist terms. These are evidently further additions. In the tenth chapter the Ebionitic tone is resumed, Jesus being still only "thy servant"; while throughout the rest of the document there is much teaching that might have come from the Judaic apostles who propagated that of the earlier chapters. As to this, however, it is difficult to come to a definite conclusion. All that is



certain is that the nucleus of the document was Judaic, and that the Christian tamperings were made at different stages, the earlier indicating the primary Ebionitic creed, in which Jesus was merely a holy man, no more God than any other "Anointed."']

Chap. VII.—Now concerning baptism, thus baptise ye: having first uttered all these things, baptise into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, in living water. But if thou hast not living water,<sup>1</sup> baptise in other water; and if thou canst not in cold, [then] in warm. But if thou hast neither, pour water upon the head thrice,<sup>2</sup> into the name of Father and Son and Holy Spirit. But before the baptism let the baptiser and baptised fast, and whatever others can; but the baptised thou shalt command to fast for one or two days before.

Chap. VIII.—But let not your fastings be in common with the hypocrites; for they fast on the second day of the week and on the fifth;<sup>3</sup> but do ye fast during the fourth, and the preparation [day].<sup>4</sup> Nor pray ye like the hypocrites, but as the Lord<sup>5</sup> commanded in his gospel, thus pray: Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth; our daily bread give us to-day, and forgive us our debt as we also forgive our debtors, and bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil; for thine is the power and the glory forever. Three times in the day pray ye thus.

Chap. IX.—Now, concerning the Eucharist,<sup>6</sup> thus give

<sup>1</sup> Probably a river or the sea. Cp. Carpenter, *Phases of Early Christianity*, p. 244, citing the *Canons of Hippolytus*.

<sup>2</sup> The Syrian method, introduced into Europe after the Crusades.

<sup>3</sup> The Jews, at least the Pharisees, fasted on Monday and Thursday, the days of the ascent and descent of Moses to and from Sinai.

<sup>4</sup> That is, Friday, called "the preparation" (for the Sabbath) by the Jews. Mr. Heron notes that the Christians fasted on Wednesdays and Fridays, but does not explain how a Christian document came to use the Jewish expression with no Christian qualification.

<sup>5</sup> After all the previous allusions to "the Lord" (*without* the article, save once in ch. iv and once in ch. vi) had plainly signified "God," we here have "the Lord" (*with* the article) suddenly used in a clearly Christian sense, to signify Jesus. The transition is flagrant. ?

<sup>6</sup> That is, in the original sense, thank-offering, as Mr. Gordon notes. Now, the sacrament, as instituted in the gospels, is *not* a thank-offering. It is evidently from the *Didachê*, or similar early lore, that the word comes to be used for the sacrament by the Fathers. It is never so used in the New Testament.



thanks : first, concerning the cup : We thank thee, our Father, for the holy vine of David <sup>1</sup> thy servant, which thou hast made known to us through Jesus thy servant ; <sup>2</sup> to thee be the glory for ever. And concerning the broken [bread] : We thank thee, our Father, for the life and knowledge which thou hast made known to us through Jesus thy servant ; to thee be the glory for ever.<sup>3</sup> Just as this broken [bread] was scattered over the hills and having been gathered together became one, so let thy church be gathered from the ends of the earth into thy kingdom ; for thine is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ forever.<sup>3</sup> But let no one eat or drink of your Eucharist, except those baptised into the name of [the] Lord ; for in regard to this the Lord hath said : Give not that which is holy to the dogs.<sup>4</sup>

Chap. X.—Now after ye are filled <sup>5</sup> thus do ye give thanks : We thank thee, holy Father, for thy holy name, which thou hast caused to dwell in our hearts, and for the knowledge and faith and immortality which thou hast made known to us through Jesus thy servant ; to thee be the glory forever. Thou, Sovereign <sup>6</sup> Almighty, didst create all things for thy name's sake ; both food and drink thou didst give to men for enjoyment, that they might give thanks to thee ; but to us thou hast graciously given spiritual food and drink and eternal life through thy servant. Before all things we thank thee that thou art mighty ; to thee be the glory for ever. Remember, Lord, thy Church, to deliver it from every evil and to make it perfect in thy love, and gather it from the four winds, [it] the sanctified, into thy kingdom, which thou hast prepared for it ; for thine is the power and the glory forever. Let

<sup>1</sup> As the American editors note, Clement of Alexandria (*Quis Dives Salvetur*, § 29) calls Jesus "the vine of David." As Jesus is "the vine" in the fourth gospel, but not in the synoptics, we may surmise that the *Didachê* was current at Alexandria.

<sup>2</sup> Gr. *παῖδος*. Canon Spence and Mr. Heron render "Son" ; but this is not the normal word for son (*υἱός*), and the same term is used for David and Jesus. It is rendered "servant" in Acts iii, 13, 26 ; iv, 27, R.V.

<sup>3</sup> Gr. "in the ages."

<sup>4</sup> Cp. Matt. vii, 6. There is no such application there.

<sup>5</sup> Mr. Heron takes this to signify that the love-feast accompanied the Eucharist. But he notes, from Dr. Taylor, that the Jews had their *chagigah* before the Passover, in order that the latter might be eaten "after being filled." Mr. Gordon translates : "After the full reception."

<sup>6</sup> Gr. *δέσποτα*. The American editors (who render it "Master") note that this word becomes rare in Christian literature towards the latter part of the second century.

grace come and let this world pass away. Hos-anna to the God <sup>1</sup> of David! Whoever is holy, let him come, whoever is not, let him repent. Maranatha.<sup>2</sup> Amen. But permit the prophets to give thanks as much as they will.

Chap. XI.—Now, whoever cometh and teacheth you all these things aforesaid, receive him; but if the teacher himself turn aside and teach another teaching, so as to overthrow [this], do not hear him; but [if he teach] so as to promote righteousness and knowledge of [the] Lord, receive him as [the] Lord. Now in regard to the apostles and prophets, according to the ordinance of the Gospel, so do ye. And every apostle who cometh to you, let him be received as [the] Lord; but he shall not remain [except for?] one day; if, however, there be need, then the next [day]; but if he remain three days, he is a false prophet.<sup>3</sup> But when the apostle departeth, let him take nothing except bread enough till he lodge [again]; but if he ask money, he is a false prophet. And every prophet who speaketh in the spirit, ye shall not try nor judge; for every sin shall be forgiven, but this sin shall not be forgiven.<sup>4</sup> But not every one that speaketh in the spirit is a prophet; but [only] if he have the ways of [the] Lord. So from their ways shall the false prophet and the prophet be known. And no prophet appointing a table <sup>5</sup> in the spirit, eateth of it, unless indeed he is a false prophet; and every prophet who teacheth the truth, if he do not that which he teacheth, is a false prophet. But every prophet, tried, true, acting with a view to the mystery of the Church on earth,<sup>6</sup> but not teaching [others] to do all that he himself

<sup>1</sup> So in the MS. Bryennios conjectures *νίψ* (Son) for *θεός*, but this does not justify the alteration of the text by several editors.

<sup>2</sup> A Syriac phrase meaning not, as is sometimes said, "The Lord cometh," but "The Lord is come." It was presumably an ancient formula in the prayers hailing the rise of the sun.

<sup>3</sup> It is difficult to reconcile this arrangement with any of the New Testament data as to the practice of the Jesuit apostles. Cp. Canon Spence, p. 91, as to "the Jewish habit of wandering from place to place."

<sup>4</sup> Cp. Mk. iii, 28-30; Matt. xii, 31; 1 Thess. v, 19, 20.

<sup>5</sup> The American editors have "a meal"; Canon Spence "a Love-Feast." See his note. And cp. Jevons, *Introd. to Hist. of Religion*, p. 333, as to the Greek *agyrtes*.

<sup>6</sup> On this obscure passage Mr. Heron has a long note, which, however, supplies little light. Dr. Taylor notes that a "cosmic mystery" [Gr. *μυστήριον κοσμικόν*] is "the manifestation in the phenomenal world of a 'mystery of the upper world,'" citing the Zohar. Canon Spence suggests that the "table" connects with the "mystery."

doeth, shall not be judged among you; for with God he hath his judgment; for so did the ancient prophets also. But whoever, in the spirit, saith: Give me money, or something else, ye shall not hear him; but if for others in need he bids [you] give, let none judge him.

Chap. XII.—And let every one that cometh in [the] Lord's name be received, but afterwards ye shall test and know him; for ye shall have understanding, right and left. If he who cometh is a wayfarer, help him as much as ye can; but he shall not remain with you, unless for two or three days, if there be necessity. But if he will take up his abode among you, being a craftsman, let him work and so eat; but if he have no craft, provide, according to your understanding; that no idler live with you as a Christian. But if he will not act according to this, he is a Christmonger;<sup>1</sup> beware of such.

Chap. XIII.—But every true prophet who will settle among you is worthy of his food. Likewise a true teacher, he also is worthy, like the workman, of his food.<sup>2</sup> Every firstfruit, then, of the produce of wine-press and threshing-floor, of oxen and of sheep, thou shalt take and give to the prophets; for they are your high-priests. But if ye have no prophet, give [it] to the poor. If thou makest a baking of bread, take the first [of it] and give according to the commandment. In like manner when thou openest a jar of wine or oil, take the first [of it] and give to the prophets; and of money and clothing and every possession, take the first, as may seem right to thee, and give according to the commandment.

Chap. XIV.—And on the Lord's-day of [the] Lord<sup>3</sup> being assembled, break bread, and give thanks, after confessing your transgressions, in order that your sacrifice may be pure. But any one that hath variance with his friend, let him not come together with you, until they be reconciled, that your sacrifice may not be defiled. For this is that which was

<sup>1</sup> Gr. *χριστέμπορος*. Warnings of this kind are given in the Epistles of Barnabas, Ignatius, and Polycarp. See Canon Spence's note.

<sup>2</sup> Note the remarkable advance in the economic provision for the preacher, clearly a later item than ch. xi.

<sup>3</sup> Canon Spence rightly translates: "on the Lord's Lord's-day." This singular phrase is obscured by the American editors, who simply translate "the Lord's day." The Greek is *κυριακὴν Κυρίου*. It is thus clear that the expression "Lord's day" was in *Pagan* use, and that the phrase "Lord's-day of [the] Lord" was an adaptation of the standing expression to either Jewish or Jesuit use. This chapter may have belonged to the pre-Christian document. There is no allusion to the crucifixion.

spoken by [the] Lord : <sup>1</sup> At every place and time, bring me a pure sacrifice; for a great king am I, saith [the] Lord, and my name is marvellous among the nations.<sup>2</sup>

Chap. XV.—Now elect for yourselves bishops and deacons worthy of the Lord, men meek and not avaricious, and upright and proved; for they, too, render you the service <sup>3</sup> of the prophets and the teachers. Therefore neglect them not; for they are the ones who are honoured of you, together with the prophets and teachers.

And reprove one another, not in anger, but in peace, as ye have [it] in the gospel; and to every one who erreth against another, let no one speak, nor let him hear [anything] from you, until he repent. But your prayers and your alms and all your deeds so do ye, as ye have [it] in the gospel of our <sup>4</sup> Lord.

Chap. XVI.—Watch for your life; let not your lamps be gone out, and let not your loins be loosed, but be ready; for ye know not the hour in which our Lord cometh. But ye shall come together often, and seek the things which befit your souls; for the whole time of your faith will not profit you, if ye be not made perfect in the last season. For in the last days the false prophets and the corruptors shall be multiplied, and the sheep shall be turned into wolves, and love shall be turned into hate; for when lawlessness increaseth they shall hate one another, and shall persecute and shall deliver up; and then shall appear the world-deceiver as the Son of God,<sup>5</sup> and shall do signs and wonders, and the earth shall be given unto his hands, and he shall commit iniquities which have never yet been done since the beginning. Then all created men shall come into the fire of trial, and many shall be made to stumble and shall perish. But they that endure in their faith shall be saved from under even this curse. And then shall appear the signs of truth; first the sign of an opening <sup>6</sup> in heaven, then the sign of a trumpet's voice, and thirdly, the resurrection of the dead; yet not of all,<sup>7</sup> but as it hath been said : The Lord will come and all the saints with him. Then shall the world see the Lord coming upon the clouds of heaven.

<sup>1</sup> Here the reference is clearly to Yahweh. The document cannot have been originally written with the same title used indifferently of Yahweh and Jesus.

<sup>2</sup> Mal. i, 11.

<sup>3</sup> Literally, "perform the liturgy" = "serve the (public) service."

<sup>4</sup> Here we have the Christist expression.

<sup>5</sup> This may have been a Jesuist allusion to Bar-Cochab, about the year 135.

<sup>6</sup> Or "outspreading."

<sup>7</sup> An early support for the "Conditional Immortality Association."

## APPENDIX B

### THE MYTH OF SIMON MAGUS

#### I

Two questions are raised under this heading—the question whether, as was argued by F. C. Baur, the “Simon Magus” of the “Clementine Recognitions” and “Homilies” is a mask-name for a polemic directed primarily at the Apostle Paul; and the more fundamental question whether the Simon Magus of the Acts is or is not a historical character.

The reasons for holding Simon to be a mythical personage (as apart from the reasons for supposing the Clementine Simon to be meant for Paul, and the story of the Acts to be a misconceiving adaptation of the Clementine narrative) are overwhelming. To begin with, Justin Martyr, a Samaritan born, expressly says<sup>1</sup> that almost all the Samaritans worshipped Simon.<sup>2</sup> This alone might dispose of the notion that the “Simonians” dated merely from the time of Paul and Peter. It is absurd to suppose that nearly all the Samaritans, a people with old cults, could be converted within a century to a new Deity originating in one man. The cult must date further back than that. And that Justin, though of Samaritan birth, could widely misconceive the cults around him, is pretty clear from his famous blunder of finding his Simon Magus as *Simo Sanctus* in the *Semo Sancus* of Rome, the old Sabine counterpart of the Eastern Semo.<sup>3</sup>

For there is abundant evidence, to begin with, that a

<sup>1</sup> *Apol.* i, 26.

<sup>2</sup> If we could but trust the assertion of Origen in the next century (*Against Celsus*, vi, 11) that there were then no Simonians left, the presumption would be that they had been absorbed by another cult.

<sup>3</sup> Ovid, *Fasti*, vi, 213; Livy, viii, 20.



name of which the basis is *Sem* is one of the oldest of Semitic God-names. We have the forms Shem, Sime-on, Sams-on, S(h)amas (the Babylonian name of the sun; Hebrew *Shemesh*), San-d-on, or Samdan<sup>1</sup> Semēn and Sem, all plainly connected with a sun-myth. Shamas or Samas was an Assyrian Sun-God, the duplicate of Melkarth and Hercules. Samson or Simson or Shimshai (= the Sun-man), the Hebrew Sun-hero, is unquestionably a mere variant of that myth. Sand-on, also a Sun-God, is the same myth over again. Baal-Samēn, "the Lord of Heaven,"<sup>2</sup> is the same conception as Baal-Melkarth; Baal, "the Lord," a Sun-God himself as well as Supreme God, being joined with the Sun-God proper. The name Sem, again, is found as signifying Hercules, in conjunction with those of Harpocrates and the Egyptian Hermes,<sup>3</sup> and is probably involved in the mythical queen-name Semiramis (Sammuramat), since she in one of the myths gets her name from Simmas, "keeper of the king's flocks," who rears her<sup>4</sup>—another form of the Sun-God, belike. Simeon, in the myth of the twelve tribes, is one of the twin-brethren, who in all mythologies are at bottom solar deities. The "on" means "great," as in Samson, Dagon, Solomon, etc.;<sup>5</sup> and the Dioscuri of the Greek and Roman myth were "the Great Twin Brethren." It was added to the name of the Samaritan God Êl Êlyon, "Great Êl,"<sup>6</sup> who is just the Êl (singular of Elohim) of the Hebrews. But the name Shem itself means "the Lofty";<sup>7</sup> and the name of the mythical ancestor of the Shemites is at bottom a God-name, just as are those of Noach, Abram, Jacob, and Isra-êl. It may also, it appears, have had the significance of "red-shining."<sup>8</sup> And, last but not least, the same vocable

<sup>1</sup> Cory's *Ancient Fragments*, ed. 1876, p. 92; Lenormant's *Chaldean Magic*, Eng. tr., p. 131.

<sup>2</sup> Sanchoniathon, in Cory, as cited, p. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Eratosthenes' Canon of Theban Kings, in Cory as cited, pp. 139-141.

<sup>4</sup> Diodorus Siculus, ii, 4.

<sup>5</sup> *Bible Folk Lore*, 1884, p. 45; cp. Steinthal on Samson, Eng. tr., with Goldziher, p. 408.

<sup>6</sup> Movers, *Die Phönizier*, i, 558.

<sup>7</sup> Goldhizer, *Hebrew Mythology*, Eng. tr., p. 132; cp. Buttmann, *Mythologus*, 1828, i, 221, and Sanchoniathon, as above.

<sup>8</sup> Volkmar, *Die Religion Jesu*, 1857, p. 281.

also has the significance of "name," so that the Semites or sons of S(h)em were also "the men with names" <sup>1</sup>; and the Hebrew "Shem hemmaphorash" or Tetragrammaton was the name of four letters (IEUE = Yahweh) or "the peculiar name." <sup>2</sup> Lenormant declares <sup>3</sup> that this last tenet came from Chaldea, where "they considered the divine name, the *Shem*, as endowed with properties so special and individual that they succeeded in making of it a distinct person." But this idea of the sacredness of the God-name was one of the most prevalent of ancient religious notions. It was still devoutly held by the Christian Origen, who argued <sup>4</sup> that the Hebrew divine names must be held to because they alone were potent to conjure with. It appears in the JUDAIC TEACHING OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES in its Christianised form (c. x), in the passage of thanksgiving beginning, "We thank thee, holy Father, for thy holy name, which thou hast made to dwell in our hearts." In the Jewish SEPHER TOLEDOTH JESCHU, Jesus is made to do his magic works by virtue of the "Shem hemmaphorash," the Tetragrammaton, of which he has furtively possessed himself. Thus could an ancient God-name retain its mysterious prestige even after the mystery-mongers (reversing the process imagined by Lenormant) had taken the name-quality out of it, and left only the word *for* "name." In other ways it clung to the Jewish cult. It is highly probable that the pre-eminent Jewish prayer, the "Shema" (or the "Shemoneh Esreh"), of which the name is explained away into insignificance, is an extremely ancient prayer to the Sun-God.<sup>5</sup> Even this is sought to be connected with a historical "Simon."<sup>6</sup> And all the while the original God Sem survives in the Jewish mythology as "Shamma-ël," the Prince of Demons and angel of death, who has power

<sup>1</sup> Meyer, *Geschichte des Alterthums*, 1884, i, 214 n.

<sup>2</sup> McClintock and Strong's *Bib. Cycl. s. v.*

<sup>3</sup> *Chaldean Magic*, Eng. tr., p. 44.

<sup>4</sup> *Against Celsus*, v, 45.

<sup>5</sup> See it in McClintock and Strong's *Cycl. s. v.*; cp. Schürer, *Jewish Nation in Time of Christ*, Eng. tr., Div. ii, Vol. ii, p. 83, where the prayer is given as the Shemoneh Esreh.

<sup>6</sup> Schürer, p. 88.

over *all peoples except the Jews*; <sup>1</sup> and at the same time in the legend of Samu-el, the unshorn, the child of the heretofore sterile mother (vexed by her rival as Rachel by Leah), the potentate who makes and unmakes kings, and who is called up as a "God" <sup>2</sup> from the earth by incantation.

But all this connects decisively with Samaria. It is not improbable that the name Samaria itself was derived from the name of the Sun-God, it being very much more likely that the mountain would be named from the God who was worshipped on it than from a man Shemer.<sup>3</sup> The last is obviously a worthless gloss. A reasonable alternative view is that as the God-name Asshur is identified with the name of the Assyrian country and people, whether giving or following their race-name, so the Semitic God-name Shem is bound up with the name Samaria, as that of Athênê with Athens. It is at all events clear that, as is claimed by Volkmar,<sup>4</sup> Sem or Simon was the chief God of the Samaritans. They declared to Antiochus, according to Josephus,<sup>5</sup> that their temple on Mount Gerizim had no name, but was that of "the greatest God"; and this squares with the other evidence, whether or not it be true that they offered, as Josephus states, to dedicate the temple to Zeus of the Hellenes. For, S(h)em being "the high," Sem-on would be the Great High One or Greatest God, just as Êl Êlyon was the great Êl, *the* Great Power, Greatest of Powers. And as Sem-on was also the Great Name, the God was in that sense without a name, which circumstance is the explanation of the otherwise pointless phrase of the Johannine Jesus (John iv, 22) to the Samaritan woman, "Ye worship that which ye know not what." And all the ideas converge in the phrases in the Acts (viii, 9-10), that Simon claimed to be "some great one" (ἐαυτὸν μέγαν) and was spoken of as "that power of God which is called Great." In fine, Simon *Magus*, the Mage, is just a version of Simon *Megas*, Great Simon.

<sup>1</sup> McClintock and Strong's *Bib. Cycl.* s. v.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Samuel xxviii, 13.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Kings xvi, 24.

<sup>4</sup> *Die Religion Jesu*, as cited.

<sup>5</sup> 12 *Antiq.* v, 5.

We know from their version of the Pentateuch that the later Samaritans, being strong "monotheists" in one of the senses of that elastic and misleading term, sought always to substitute angels for Elohim in the old narratives of divine action (*e. g.* Gen. iii, 5; v, 1; v, 24; xvii, 22), "lest a corporeal existence should be attributed to the Deity."<sup>1</sup> And it is instructive to note how their theological drift exhibits itself in early Christism. The doctrine of the "Logos" is not merely Alexandrian-Christian, it is Judaic. Some of the Aramaic paraphrasts of the Old Testament at times wrote "the *Word* of Jehovah" instead of the angel of Jehovah, sometimes the "She-kin-ah," which means "the abode of the Word of Jehovah."<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, we know from the Gospel of Peter that one of the early Christian sects regarded Jesus as having received his *dynamis*, his power, at baptism, and yielded it up at crucifixion. Here we are close to Samaritanism, in which the angels were regarded<sup>3</sup> as "uncreated influences proceeding from God (*dynameis*, powers)," pretty much as Simon is described in the Acts. Thus "Simon" for the Samaritans would just be "Êl," which the Samaritan Justin, like the writer of "Peter," held to mean "Power." And at the same time, be it observed, Simon was "the Word."

But still the proof abounds. In Lucian's account of the Syrian Goddess we are told<sup>4</sup> that in the temple at Byblos there was a statue, apparently epicene or double-sexed, called by some Dionysos, by others Deucalion, and by others *Semiramis*, but to which the Syrians gave no specific name, calling it only *Semeion*, a word which in Greek properly means "sign," but may mean image. There can be little doubt that Movers<sup>5</sup> was right in surmising this statue to be just the primordial Sem or Sem-on, the Great Sem of the Semitic race. The two-sexed character is in perfect keeping with the ideal

<sup>1</sup> G. L. Bauer, *Theol. of the Old Test.*, Eng. tr., 1837, p. 5; Etheridge, *The Targums on the Pentateuch*, i (1862), introd., pp. 5, 14, 17.

<sup>2</sup> Bauer and Etheridge, as cited.

<sup>3</sup> Gieseler, *Comp. of Ec. Hist.*, Eng. tr., i, 48.

<sup>4</sup> *De Dea Syria*, c. 33.

<sup>5</sup> *Die Phönizier*, i, 417, 634.

duality of the old Assyrian Nature-Gods;<sup>1</sup> and the peculiar detail of the name which was not a name brings us again to the Sem-on of the Samaritans.

Everything in the Christian legend falls in with this identification. The Fathers<sup>2</sup> tell us of one Helen, a prostitute from Tyre, with whom Simon went about, and whom he gave out to be a reincarnation of Helen of Troy, and also his "Thought." Helen is almost unquestionably, as Baur<sup>3</sup> surmised, the *Selene* or *Luna* of the old sun-cultus. In the paragraph following his account of the *Semeion*, Lucian tells us that in the forepart of the same temple stands the throne of Helios, but without a statue; Helios and Selene, the sun and moon, being the only divinities not sculptured in the temple—though he goes on to mention that behind the throne is a statue of a clothed and bearded Apollo, quite different from the Greek form. Here, again, we have a mystic conception of the Sun-God, a conception necessarily confusing to ordinary visitors, even supposing the priests themselves to have had any consistent ideas about it; and the fact<sup>4</sup> that the temple further contained among other statues one of *Helena* (herself an old Moon-Goddess), gave ample opportunity for the usual mythological variants. Thus it came about that while Justin and Irenæus connect Simon Magus with *Helen*, Irenæus says the Simonians have "an image of Simon in the likeness of *Jupiter*, and of Helen in that of *Minerva*"—a curious statement, which at once recalls that of Lucian<sup>5</sup> that the *Hêrê* of the temple of Byblos "has something of Athênê and Aphrodite, of *Selene* and Rhea, of Artemis, of Nemesis, and of the *Parcæ*." This again squares with the fact that in the Chaldeo-Babylonian system Samas was associated with the goddess Gula, "*triform as personating the moon*, and sometimes replaced by a group of three spouses of equal rank, Malkit, Gula, and Anunit."<sup>6</sup> And in the Latin translation by Rufinus of the pseudo-

<sup>1</sup> Lenormant, as cited, p. 129.

<sup>2</sup> Justin, *Apol.* i, 26; Irenæus, i, 23, § 2; Tertullian, *De Anima*, 34.

<sup>3</sup> *Die christliche Gnosis*, 1835, p. 309.

<sup>4</sup> *De Dea Syria*, 40.

<sup>5</sup> *Id.* 32.

<sup>6</sup> Lenormant, as cited, p. 117.



Clementine "Recognitions," for Helena we actually have *Luna*.

The chain is complete. We are dealing not with a historic person or persons, but with an ancient cult, which Christian ignorance and Judaic "monotheism" between them strove to reduce somehow to a historical narrative, as the myths of Abraham and Samson and Israel and Elijah and a dozen others had been reduced, as the mythic ritual had been in the gospels, and as indeed the rituals of Paganism had been in the current pagan mythologies. There was no Samaritan Simon the Mage, who met a Christian Peter; it was not a preaching Simon who taught of himself, but the Samaritan populace who traditionally believed of their God Sem or Simon, that "he appeared among the Jews as the Son, while in Samaria he descended as the Father, *and in the rest of the nations he came as the Holy Spirit*."<sup>1</sup> The parallel holds down to the last jot. The *Semeion* of the temple of Byblos *had a dove on his head*,<sup>2</sup> and there are abundant Jewish charges as to the worship of a dove by the Samaritans at Mount Gerizim;<sup>3</sup> so that Simon was the Logos receiving the Holy Spirit, the *dynamis*, just as Jesus did in the Gospels; and the Christists' doctrine that the Holy Spirit should be given to the nations is simply an adaptation of the Samaritan syncretism, which they sought to override by a syncretism of their own in their latest gospel, where it comes out that their Galilean Jesus was *called a Samaritan* by Jews,<sup>4</sup> a charge which curiously enough he does not dispute, denying only that he has "a daimon." This is exactly the myth of Simon turned into a story of an incarnate Messiah, who affirms his reality.<sup>5</sup> Well might the Fathers call their imaginary "Simon" the Father of all heresies.

<sup>1</sup> Irenæus, as cited.

<sup>2</sup> Lucian, as cited.

<sup>3</sup> Reland, *Dissertat. Miscellan.*, Pars i, 1706, p. 147; *cp. Enc. Bib.* art. SAMARITANS, 4a. The dove was everywhere regarded in Syria as sacred, in connection with the myth of Semiramis (Diodorus, ii, 4), which bears so closely on the name Samaria.

<sup>4</sup> John viii, 48.

<sup>5</sup> Mem. the aged Simeon of Luke ii, who blessed the child Jesus. "The Holy Spirit was upon him" (v. 25). With him is associated Anna the Prophetess. Cp. Hannah, mother of Samuel.

He was the "Father" in a sense of their own creed, as well as of all the Gnosticisms into which it broke.

## II

What hinders ordinary students from accepting Baur's view of the "Clementine" Simon, which we have here sought to support, is the existence of the fragments of writings attributed to Simon, together with the circumstantialities of the story in the Acts and the Fathers. But these circumstantialities are just the marks of all the ancient myths, Jewish, Christian, and Gentile; and the attribution of writings to Simon Magus no more proves his historical existence than the same process proves the historical existence of Orpheus and Moses.<sup>1</sup> The fragments and paraphrases preserved by the Fathers are just part of the mass of ancient Occultism; and their connection with the name of Simon the Mage is merely a variation of the Jewish myth which attributes the authorship of the Zohar to Simon Ben Jochaï, a mythical or mythicised personage if ever there was one. He is fabled to have lived in a cave for twelve years, studying the Cabbala, during which time he was visited by Elias. At his death fire was seen in the cave, and a voice from heaven was heard saying, "Come ye to the marriage of Simon Ben Jochaï: he is entering into peace, and shall rest in his chamber." At his burial there was heard a voice crying, "This is he who caused the earth to quake and the kingdoms to shake."<sup>2</sup> Simon is said to have belonged to the first century of the Christian era; while the Zohar is held to have been composed in the 13th century.<sup>3</sup> In all probability the *matter* of the Zohar is largely ancient; and the association of it (as of the *Shema* or *Shemoneh Esreh* prayer) with the name Simon points distinctly to a traditional vogue of the name in

<sup>1</sup> Professor Smith, who accepts the historicity of Simon (*Ecce Deus*, pp. 11, 103) does so without noting that it has been challenged. It would be interesting to have his grounds for discriminating between the God and the man.

<sup>2</sup> McClintock and Strong's *Bib. Cyc.*

<sup>3</sup> Kuenen, *Religion of Israel*, Eng. tr., iii, 314.

Semitic Gnosticism. But there is no more reason to believe that an actual Simon composed the Zohar, or the "Great Denial" (perhaps = antinomy) attributed to Simon the Mage, than to believe in the above stories of the voices from heaven and those of the miracles of the Mage in the Acts. The Talmudic legends clearly point to a sun myth, bringing Simon into connection with Elias, Eli-jah, an unquestionable Sun-God, who combines the names El and Jah, though reduced by the Judaic Evermerising monotheists to the rank of a judge-prophet, as was Samu-el, and as Sams-on was made a "judge." It lay in the essence of ancient religiosity to do this, and at the same time to seek to father all its documents on sacrosanct names. That a real Samaritan Simon of the first century should write a new occultist book and publish it as his own, is contrary to the whole spirit of the time. Only centuries after the period of its composition could such a book be attributed to an ordinary human author by those who accepted it. If it was current in the first century, it must have been either fathered on an ancient and mythical Simon or regarded as a book of the mysteries of the God Simon. The opinions or statements of the Christian Fathers concerning it are quite worthless save as embodying a name-tradition.

### III

There remains to be considered the theory of the Tübingen school that the Christian legend of Simon Magus is to be found in its earliest form in the "Clementines," that body of early sectarian forged literature which has been made to yield so much light as to the early history of the Christist Church. Here, in a set of writings ("Recognitions" and "Homilies," of which books one is a redaction of the other), purporting to be by Clement of Rome, we have a propaganda that is on the face of it strongly Petrine, and that turns out on analysis to be strongly anti-Pauline, though the gist of the matter is a series of disputations between Peter and Simon the Mage. It is impossible at present to settle

what was the first form of these documents, which as they stand bear marks of the third century, and survive only in the Latin translation of Rufinus (d. 410); but it is plain that they preserve elements of the early Ebionitic or Judæo-Christian opposition to the Gentile Christism of Paul. The Tübingen theory is that under the name of Simon Magus Paul is attacked throughout. This, at first sight, certainly seems a fantastic thesis; but an examination of the matter shows that it is very strongly founded. A leading feature in the conduct of Simon Magus in the Clementines, as in the Acts, is his attempt to purchase apostleship with money. Now, this corresponds very closely with the act of Paul in bringing to Jerusalem a subsidy from the Western churches, an act which, on the part of one not recognised as an apostle, and exhibited in the Epistles as always on jealous terms <sup>1</sup> with the Jerusalem apostles, would naturally rank as an attempt to purchase the Holy Ghost with lucre. Again, Simon Magus in the Clementines claims to rest his authority on divine visions, which is exactly the position of Paul; <sup>2</sup> and Peter denies that visions have such authority. Once recognise the primary strife between Judaising and Gentilising Christians, of which there are so many traces in New Testament and Patristic literature, and it is easy to see that these are the very points on which the anti-Paulinists would most bitterly oppose Paul and his movement. In the Clementines, Peter not only opposes the Magus in Palestine, but follows him to Rome, thus carrying the antagonism between the two sects over the whole theoretic field. The fact that both Simon Peter and Simon Magus, Cephas and Paul, are made to journey from East to West, and to die in the West, like the immemorial Sun-God, is suggestive.

That the Judaists should give Paul a symbolical name, again, was quite in keeping with the usual dialectic of the time, in which Rome, for instance, figured as "Babylon," the typical great hostile city of Jewish remembrance. Just as Babylon symbolised heathen oppression, Samaria

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xv, 10; 2 Cor. xi, 13, 23; Gal. i, 7; ii, 11.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. xv, 9; 2 Cor. xii, 4; Gal. i, 12.

typified heathen heresy, the divergence from the Jewish cult in a heathen direction. Such divergence was the Judaist gravamen against Paul, who broke away from the law; and as Simon, Semo, typified Samaritan heresy in general, it was peculiarly suited to the arch-heretic who sought to overthrow the supreme privilege of Jerusalem. Simon was the Samaritan "false Christ," and Paul's preaching falsified the Judaic Christ.<sup>1</sup> And nothing is more remarkable in the matter than the way in which the plainly patched-up reconciliatory narrative of the Acts squares with this theory. The book of Acts is explicable only on the hypothesis that it was designed, in its final form, to reconcile the long-opposed sects by reconciling Peter and Paul in a quasi-historical narrative. The narrative plainly clashes with Paul's alleged Epistles. For the rest, it is managed largely on the plan of duplicating the exploits of the two heroes, so that Paul confutes Elymas as Peter does Simon, and closely duplicates one of Peter's miracles.<sup>2</sup> Some legends were in existence to start with, and others were invented to match them. Similarly the dispute between Paul and Barnabas at Antioch was to supersede the strife there between Paul and Peter.<sup>3</sup> If then the composer of the Acts had before him a legend of Peter confuting Simon the Mage, it would suit him to retain it, since thus would he best dissociate the Mage from Paul. But, as Zeller points out, he is careful, first of all, to place the story of the Mage before Paul's conversion; and at the same time he shows he knows the original significance of the charge against Simon Magus as to offering money, by ignoring the most important of Paul's subsidies.<sup>4</sup>

The application of a great mass of the polemic against Simon Magus in the Clementines is so obvious that the

<sup>1</sup> Even a late copyist or reader of one of the Clementine MSS. confusedly recognised a hostility to Paul as underlying his text. See Anti-Nicene Lib. trans., *Recog.* i, 70.

<sup>2</sup> Acts iii, 1-12, etc.; xiv, 8-15, etc.

<sup>3</sup> Gal. ii, 11-14.

<sup>4</sup> See the whole data discussed in Baur, *Ch. Hist. of the First Three Cent.*, Eng. tr., i, 91-98, etc.; Paul, Eng. tr., i, 88, 95, etc.; Zeller, *Contents and Origin of the Acts*, Eng. tr., i, 250 sq.; Volkmar, *Die Religion Jesu*; Schmiedel, art. SIMON MAGUS in *Encyc. Bib.*



evasion of the problem by Harnack and Salmon and others on futile pleas of "false appearances" and "common-sense" is simply a confession of defeat. Baur's case, after being dismissed on pretexts of "common-sense" by those who could not meet it, is irresistibly restated by Schmiedel, on a full survey of its development by Lipsius and others. The only solution is, that the Clementines adapt for new purposes a mass of old anti-Pauline matter. At the time at which they were redacted, Paul had been established as a "catholic" figure; and there could be no such hatred to him as breathes through the fierce impeachments of the teaching of the Paulines in the Recognitions and Homilies. For it is at the Epistles that the bulk of the attacks are directed. What has been done is to use up, for a new polemic with heretics, a quantity of old anti-Pauline literature in which the disguising of Paul under the name of Simon Magus probably blinded the redactors to its purpose. For them Simon was simply the arch-heretic, and it was against his detested memory and persisting influence that they operated.

The theory is no doubt a complicated one; but when taken in its full extent, as recognising the addition of the heresy of the Gnostic Paulinist Marcion to that of Paul, it is perfectly consistent with the documents; and there is really no other view worth discussing, as regards the connection of Simon Magus with Peter. The orthodox belief that Simon was an actual Samaritan who suddenly persuaded the people of Samaria to regard him as a divine incarnation, as told in the Acts, will not explain the mass of identities in the Clementines between the teaching ascribed to him and the actual Pauline Epistles. In explaining the choice of the name Simon for Paul by his Judaic antagonists, the myth-theory is far more helpful than the view of Simon's historicity. A "false God" Simon, the God of the typically misbelieving Samaritans, would be by Jews reduced to human status as a matter of course, unless he were simply classed as a "daimon." A "Simon the Mage" was for them just the type they wanted wherewith to identify Paul, the new False Teacher. To identify, on the other hand, a

contemporary or lately deceased Paul with a contemporary or lately deceased Simon would be an idle device, missing the end in view. The name of such a Simon would for purposes of aspersion be worth little or nothing. The name had to be a widely and long notorious one, and the myth supplied it.

#### IV

In conclusion, let it be noted that the bearing of the myth of Simon Magus on Christianity is not limited to the explanation of the Samaritan origins and the elucidation of the Paul-and-Peter antagonism. The more the matter is looked into, the more reason is seen for surmising that Samaria played a large part in the beginnings of the Christian system. Samaria seems to have been beyond all other parts of Palestine a crucible in which manifold cult-elements tended to be fused by syncretic ideas; and the extent to which Samaria figures in the fourth gospel is a phenomenon not yet adequately explained. The fact that Jesus is there said to have been called a Samaritan reminds us that among the movements of the "false Christs" so often alluded to in the Gospels<sup>1</sup> a Samaritan cult of the mystic Christ may have counted for much. The fourth gospel itself would come under the anti-Pauline ban, inasmuch as, while Simon Magus is said to have sought to substitute Mount Gerizim for Jerusalem, Jesus here<sup>2</sup> is made to set aside both the Samaritan mountain and Jerusalem. The very fact that the Samaritan woman professedly expects the coming of Messiah, is a hint that the story of the well and the living water may be of Samaritan Messianic origin. Nay more, since we know that the Samaritans in particular laid stress on the Messiah Ben Joseph rather than on the Messiah Ben David, they regarding themselves as of Josephite descent, it is probable that the very legend of Jesus being the putative son of one Joseph, which we know was absent from the Ebionite version of Matthew, was framed to meet the Samaritan view. These matters are still far from having been exhaustively considered.

<sup>1</sup> Cp. 2 Cor. xi, 4.

<sup>2</sup> John iv, 21.

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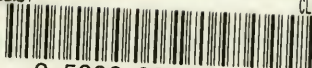
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